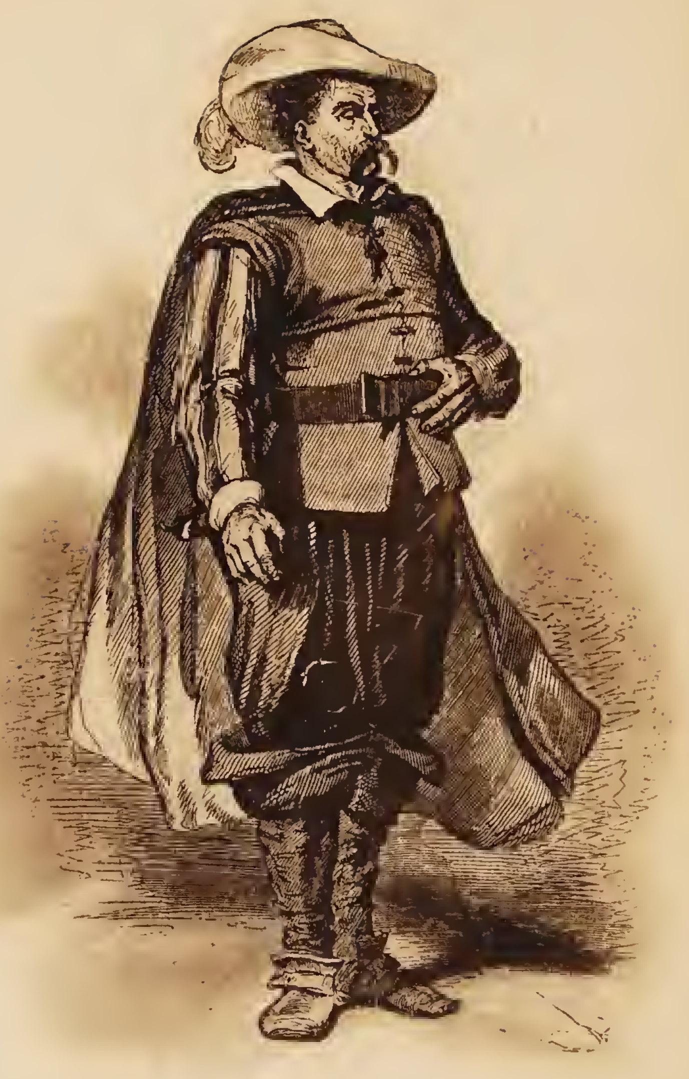

THE FIRST COMPLETE TRANSLATION
INTO ENGLISH

Honoré de Balzac

IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

The Child of Malediction

A Mad Musician
The King's Friend
Venetian Nights

TRANSLATED BY
F. D. BYRNE AND LIONEL STRACHEY

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN PHOTOGRAVURE

VOLUME TWENTY-THREE

P. F. COLLIER & SON
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CONTENTS

The Child of Malediction..
A Mad Musician..
The King's Friend..
Venetian Nights..

THE CHILD OF MALEDICTION

THE CHILD OF MALEDICTION

I

HOW THE MOTHER LIVED

AT TWO O'CLOCK one winter's morning, the Countess Jeanne d'Herouville was suffering such severe pain, that, in spite of her inexperience, she divined that she would very soon become a mother; and the instinct which leads us to expect relief from a change of position counselled her to sit upright, either to study an entirely new kind of suffering, or to reflect on her situation. She was a prey to cruel fears, caused less by the risk of a first deliverance, which is a source of terror to most women, than by the dangers which threatened the child. To avoid awaking her husband, who was sleeping at her side, the poor woman took precautions which the fear that dominated her rendered as minute as those of an escaping prisoner. Although her agony became more and more intense at every moment, she ceased to feel it, so much was her strength occupied with the painful operation of changing her position, which she did by resting the weight of her body on her hands. Forced to keep an eye on the Count, she divided her attention between the bed-quilt and his broad, weather-beaten countenance, whose huge mustache brushed against her shoulder. Whenever her husband's respiration became audible for a second it inspired her with fears that revived the flush of crimson in her cheeks, caused by her double anguish. The criminal trying to turn noiselessly in his prison lock the key which he has found could not be more timidly audacious. When the Countess found herself sitting upright without having awakened her guardian, her gesture of infantine joy revealed all the touching artlessness of her nature; but the half-formed smile on her inflamed lips was promptly repressed; a troubled thought clouded her pure forehead, and her large blue eyes resumed their expression of sadness. She heaved a deep sigh, and put back her hands, not without prudent precautions, on the conjugal pillow. Then, as though finding herself, for the first time since her marriage, free in thought and action, she regarded the objects about her, extending her neck in quick motions resembling those of a bird in a cage. Seeing her thus, one might easily have imagined that in days gone by she had been all joy and folly, but that suddenly destiny had destroyed her first hopes, and changed her ingenuous gayety into melancholy.

The room was one of those which, even in our own day, are pointed out by certain octogenarian care-takers to tourists visiting old castles, with the words: "This is the chamber in which Louis XIII. slept." Fine tapestries, generally dark in hue, hung on a background of walnut, the delicate carving of which had been blackened by time. The ceiling was decorated in the style of the preceding century, and still preserved its original walnut color. These decorations, of a rather severe cast, reflected the light so little that it was difficult to discern their design, even when the sun shone full into the room, which was lofty and large. Thus the silver lamp, placed on the mantel of a vast fireplace, did such poor service that its flickering light might have been compared to those nebulous stars, which, for moments only, pierce the gray veil of an autumn night. The fire-dogs, seen against the marble of the hearth, which faced the bed, made such grotesquely hideous faces that she dared not allow her eyes to rest upon them; she almost feared to see them move, or hear a burst of laughter from their misshapen mouths. At that moment a horrible storm was groaning through the chimney, which was so large that the least gust of wind was caught and whirled into the hearth, giving the tongues of flame a sort of life, as they, alternately, shone brightly and died away. The escutcheon of Herouville, sculptured in white marble, gave the appearance of a tomb to that portion of the bed which overhung the occupants, another monument erected to Hymeneal glory. A modern architect would have been quite embarrassed to decide whether the room had been constructed for the bed, or the bed for the room. Two cupids sporting over a canopy of walnut ornamented with garlands might have passed for angels, and the columns of the same wood which supported the canopy presented mythological allegories, the explanation of which might be found either in the Bible or in the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid. Remove the bed, and such a canopy would have been equally in place over the pulpit of a church. Three steps led up to this sumptuous couch, which was surrounded by a platform and decorated with two curtains of green silk, in large, brilliant, watered patterns. The folds in these immense curtains were so stiff that at night one might have taken them for a tissue of metal. On the green velvet coverlet, fringed with gold, at the foot of this lordly bed, the superstition of the d'Herouvilles had caused a large crucifix to be embroidered.

On one side of the fireplace was a precious and magnificently carved wooden chest, which the newly married couple had received as a wedding present. These old trunks, now so much sought after by collectors, served, in those days, as the storeroom of feminine ornaments. They contained laces, robes, collars, alms-boxes, masks, gloves, veils, and every article of coquetry invented in the sixteenth century. On the other side, for symmetry, was placed a similar piece of furniture, which held the Countess's books, papers and jewels. Antique armchairs in damask and a large mirror of Venetian glass completed the furniture of the room. The floor was covered with a Persian carpet, the richness of which attested the wealth of the Count. On the highest step leading to the bed was a small table, on which the chambermaid served, every evening, some spiced beverage in a silver or golden goblet.

When we are some way along the journey of life, we understand the secret influence exercised by things inanimate upon the mind. At this moment the Countess was scanning all the articles of furniture as though they were imbued with life; she seemed to ask them for protection; but their sombre richness appeared to her inexorable.

All at once the storm increased in fury. The young woman no longer dared to augur anything favorable, hearing its thundering wrath. In that age of superstition, the action of the elements was interpreted according to the ideas and temperament of the individual. She suddenly turned her eyes toward the casement windows at the end of the room, but the smallness of the panes and the intricacy of the leaden wires prevented her from ascertaining by the appearance of the heavens whether the end of the world was approaching, as was claimed by certain monks to serve their selfish purposes. She could have easily believed these predictions, for in the roar of the angry sea, whose waves beat against the walls of the castle, joined the great voice of the tempest, and the very rocks seemed to be shaking. Though her sufferings became more and more severe, the Countess did not dare to awaken her husband, but she examined his features, as if despair had led her, as a last resort, to seek consolation in such an unlikely spot.

If the objects in the room about the young woman were dreary, this countenance, in spite of the calm of sleep, seemed more dreary still. Blown about by the wind, the flame of the lamp, which was burning low, lighted up the Count's head at intervals, so that the flickering of the light over his calm face seemed to reflect some stormy debate within. The Countess was scarcely able to reassure herself on discovering the cause of this phenomenon. Every time a gust of wind threw the light on the broad, rugged face of the Count, it seemed to her that her husband was about to fix upon her his terrible gaze. Implacable as the war which was then raging between Calvinism and the Church, the forehead of the Count was a menace, even in sleep; numerous furrows produced by the wild emotions of a warrior's life gave it an indefinite resemblance to the time-worn monuments of the period; his hair, like the white moss clinging to old oaks, and gray before its time, fell raggedly over a brow that bore the stamp of intolerance and brutality. The aquiline nose, which resembled the beak of a bird, the dark rings about the yellowish eyes, the prominent cheek-bones of a thin countenance, the rigidity of the deep wrinkles, the disdain apparent in the lower lip—all indicated ambition, despotism and strength the more dangerous from the fact that the narrow skull betrayed an absolute lack of intellect and denoted courage without generosity. This countenance was horribly disfigured by a large scar, forming, as it were, a second mouth in the right cheek. At the age of thirty-three years, the Count, eager to distinguish himself in the unhappy religious war, the signal of which was given by St. Bartholomew's Day, had been seriously wounded at the siege of La Rochelle. This wound increased his hatred of his enemies; but he also extended his hatred, and perhaps naturally enough, to men with handsome faces. Before this catastrophe, he had been already so plain that no lady would receive his attentions. The sole passion of his youth was a celebrated woman who went by the name of the Belle Romaine. This new misfortune gave him so much distrust of himself and made him so susceptible that he no longer hoped to inspire true love, and his character became so savage that, if his gallantry was successful, it must have been due to the terror inspired by his cruelties. The left hand of this terrible Catholic, which was uncovered, completes his portrait. Extended so as to guard the Countess as a miser guards his gold, this enormous hand was so abundantly covered with hair, it presented a network of veins and muscles so remarkable, that it resembled some branch of a tree covered with ivy. A child would have recognized, in the face of the Count, one of the ogres in its fairy-tales. It sufficed to notice what room was occupied by the Count in the bed to estimate his gigantic proportions. His great, grizzly eyebrows covered his eyelashes in such a fashion as to accentuate the piercing gaze of his eye, in which glittered the ferocity of a wolf brought to bay. Under his lionlike nose, his large unkempt mustache—for he cared surprisingly little for his appearance—hid his upper lip. Happily for the Countess, her husband's great mouth was silent, for the gentlest sounds of his hoarse voice frightened her. Although the Count d'Herouville was scarcely fifty years old, the fatigues of war, without affecting his robust constitution, had so marked his physiognomy that at first glance he might be taken for sixty. But he took little trouble to pass for an exquisite.

The Countess, who was in her nineteenth year, formed a painful contrast beside this immense creature. She was pale and slender. Her nut-brown hair, tinged with gold, played about her neck in clouds of brown; her face reminded one of those ivory-tinted Madonnas of Carlo Dolci, who seem to be expiring in physical agony. She seemed an angel charged with the mission of softening the will of the Count d'Herouville.

"No, he will not kill us," she said to herself, after she had contemplated her husband for some time. "Is he not frank, noble, brave and faithful to his word?" The last phrase made her shudder; then she became motionless, as though petrified.

To understand the horror of the situation in which the Countess found herself, it is necessary to add that this nocturnal scene took place in the year 1591, at a time when civil war reigned in France, and when the laws were not in force. The excesses of the League, opposed to the coronation of Henri IV., surpassed all the calamities of previous religious wars. There was then so much license that no one was surprised to see a great lord kill his enemy publicly and even in the light of day. If a military expedition directed against private interests was conducted in the name of the League or the King, it evoked praise from either party. Thus it was that Balaguy, a soldier, almost succeeded in becoming a sovereign prince at the gates of France. As to family murders, if such an expression be permitted, "they mattered no more than the cutting of a wisp of straw," as was said by a writer of the time, unless they were accompanied by too much cruelty. Some time before the death of the King, a lady of the Court assassinated a gentleman who had spoken evil of her. One of the favorites of Henri III. said to him: "By Heaven, Sire, 'twas a very pretty thrust!"

By reason of the rigor of his punishments, the Count d'Herouville, one of the most zealous royalists in Normandy, maintained authority over all that portion of the province which borders on Brittany. The head of one of the richest families in France, he had considerably augmented the revenue from his numerous lands by marrying, seven months before the night upon which this story opens, Jeanne de Savin, a young lady who, by a chance quite common in a period when men were cut off like wasps, had suddenly found herself the representative of the two branches of the House of Saint Savin. Necessity and fright were the only motives of this union. At a banquet given, two months afterward, in the city of Bayeux, to the Count and Countess d'Herouville, in honor of their marriage, there arose a discussion which, at such an ignorant period, was thought very absurd; it was relative to the legitimacy of children coming into the world ten months after the death of the husband, or seven months after the wedding day.

"Madame," brutally said the Count to his wife, "as to giving me a child ten months after my death, I cannot help that. But do not begin by giving me a seven months' child."

"What would you do in such a case, old bear?" asked the young Marquis of Verneuil, thinking that the Count was joking.

"I would wring the necks of the mother and child, and very properly."

This peremptory reply had the effect of closing the imprudent discussion. The diners kept silence, contemplating the pretty Countess d'Herouville with a sort of terror. All were persuaded that in the event of such an occurrence this grim *seigneur* would execute his threat.

The words of the Count still reverberated in the young woman's brain; at the same instant, one of those presentiments which strike into the soul like a flash from the future warned her that her child would be born seven months from the wedding. She was bathed in perspiration from head to foot. Since that time not a day passed that this secret terror had not imbittered her most innocent pleasures. The remembrance of the look and of the inflection of the voice with which the Count had accompanied his warning still froze the blood in her veins, and she forgot her pain, leaning over the sleeping head, seeking to find there the signs of pity which she had looked for in vain during the day.

"Poor little one!" she said, in words which sounded like a sob. She said no more; there are thoughts which a mother cannot endure. Incapable of reasoning, the Countess was, so to speak, choked by an unknown anguish. Two tears rolled slowly down her cheeks, tracing two shining lines, and remained suspended on her chin, like dewdrops on a lily. What man of science will dare to say that the emotions of a mother do not penetrate the child in her bosom, in the hours when the soul dominates the body?

Will the terror which agitates the tree affect the fruit? This word, "Poor little one!" was it a sentence prompted by a vision of its future? The shuddering of the mother was vehement, and her look was very piercing!

The bitter response of the Count to Verneuil was a link which connected his wife's past with this premature birth. Those odious suspicions, so publicly expressed, had inculcated in the mind of the Countess a terror which would dominate her in the days to come. Since that fatal banquet she had banished from her mind a thousand pictures formed by her lively imagination with as much fear as another woman would have had pleasure in calling them up. She refused herself the happy contemplation of the days when her heart was free to love. Like the melodies of his native land to an exile, these memories gave her such delicious sensations that her young conscience reproached her for them, as if they had been crimes, and they served to aggravate the Count's threat: this was the horrible secret which oppressed the Countess.

Features in repose possess a softness due to the perfect rest of body and mind; but, though this calm changed the hard expression of the Count very little, illusion presents such attracting mirages to the unhappy, that the woman finished by finding a hope in this tranquillity. The storm, which was now pouring down its torrents of rain, was audible only in a kind of melancholy moaning; the fears and sufferings of the Countess also seemed to give her a moment of respite. While now studying the face of the man to whom her life was bound, the Countess allowed herself to be drawn into a revery, the sweetness of which was so intoxicating that she had not the power to break the charm. In an instant, in one of those visions which are not wholly uncontrolled by Divinity, she saw pass before her fleeting images of a former happiness now lost forever.

At first, Jeanne faintly saw, as in the dim light of the dawn, the little house in which her smiling childhood had been passed: there was the green sward, the rippling brook and the little room, the scene of her childish play. She saw herself picking flowers, planting them, and not understanding why they should all fade without growing, although she watered them incessantly. Soon, there appeared the outlines of the great city and the house, browned with age, to which her mother had taken her when she was seven years old. Her searching memory showed her the faces of the schoolmasters who had tormented her. Repeating to herself the old Spanish and Italian songs she used to sing to the accompaniment of her pretty rebec,[1] she recalled the figure of her father. When he returned from the palace she watched him dismount from his mule in his peculiar manner, took his hand to walk up the staircase, and, by her prattle, banished the judicial cares which he could not always cast aside with his black robe. She gave no more than a passing glance at her aunt's confessor, the Prior of the Convent of the Clarisses, a stern and fanciful man, who had the task of initiating her into the mysteries of religion. Hardened by the intolerance of his religion, the old priest expatiated on the pains of hell at every opportunity, speaking always of celestial vengeance, and worked upon her fears by persuading her that she was always in the presence of God. She became so timid that she dared not raise her eyes, and a respectful deference to her mother took the place of the romps and frolics which they had previously engaged in together. From this moment, a religious terror took hold of her young heart whenever she saw her beloved mother's eyes upon her with a semblance of anger in them.

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[1] A musical instrument not unlike a violin.

She found herself all at once in the next stage of her childhood, when, as a young girl, she was still ignorant of life. She left regretfully the days in which her greatest joy had been to work with her mother in a little tapestried room, to pray in a church, to sing a ditty to the accompaniment of her rebec, to read a book of chivalry in secret, to pick a flower to pieces for curiosity, to play with the presents given her by her father on Saint John's day, and to ponder over the meaning of sentences broken off at her appearance. Then she effaced the thought—as one erases a pencilled word in an album—of these childish joys; her imagination chose for her, among all the pictures which the first sixteen years of her life could offer, a new memory. The happy peace of her childhood had brought her less sweetness than a single one of the sorrows which had come to her in the last two years of her life, years rich in treasures, to be enshrined in the heart forever. The Countess suddenly came to that charming morning when, at the end of the great carved oak parlor, which served as the dining-room, she saw her handsome cousin for the first time. Fearing the temptations of Paris, her mother's family had sent this young courtier to Rouen, in the hope that he would learn the duties of the magistracy from his great-uncle, whose office he might some day assume. The Countess smiled while thinking of the haste with which she had disappeared on recognizing this unexpected relative. In spite of her quickness in opening and closing the door, her glance had stamped upon her mind such a vivid impression of the scene that she still seemed to take in every detail of his appearance as he turned his head. Then she had only admired, as she withdrew, the taste and magnificence of his Paris-made dress; but, now bolder in her memory, her eye passed freely from the cloak of purple velvet, embroidered with gold and trimmed with satin, to the buckles of his shoes, the facings of his doublet, and the ruffle that surrounded a neck as white as the lace about it. She caressed with her hand features set off by a little mustache, twisted up to a point, and a pointed beard.

In the silence of the night, her eyes fixed on the curtains which she saw no longer, forgetting the storm and her husband, the Countess recalled how, after days which seemed as long as years, so full were they, she loved and was loved; how, fearing the severe looks of her mother, she had crept into her father's study one morning, to make a confidant of him, after having seated herself on his knee and indulged in some pranks which had brought a smile to the lips of the eloquent judge, the smile which she had waited for in order to say—

"Will you be angry if I tell you something?"

She could almost still hear her father words, when, after a question, she told her love for the first time—

"Very well, my child, we shall see. If he studies well, if he wishes to succeed me, if he continues to please me, I shall take your part!"

She had listened to nothing more; she had kissed her father and upset his papers as she ran to the great linden tree, under which, every morning, before the appearance of her mother, she met the charming George de Chaverny! The courtier promised to devour laws and customs; he abandoned the rich clothes of the nobility of the sword for the severe costume of the law.

"I like you better dressed in black," she told him.

It was untrue, but this falsehood had softened his regret at parting with his sword. The recollection of the ruses employed to deceive her mother, who was so strict, brought back to her the pleasures of an innocent and reciprocated love. At these meetings under the linden, there was talk without restraint, furtive caresses, and all the little nothings of a love which is pure. Living again, as in a dream, through those delicious days, which she had often told herself were too happy, she ventured to kiss, in empty space, that young face which looked at her so passionately, and that red mouth, which told her of love so well. She had loved Chaverny, poor enough in the eyes of the world; but what treasures had she not found in that soul, as gentle as it was strong! Suddenly the judge died, Chaverny did not succeed him; the civil war plunged the country into bloodshed. Aided by their cousin, she and her mother found a secret retreat in a little town of lower Normandy. Soon the successive deaths of her relatives made her one of the richest heiresses in France. Happiness departed with the advent of riches. The savage and terrible figure of the Count d'Herouville, who asked her hand in marriage, appeared to her like a great black cloud, spreading gloom over the beauties of sunny landscape. The poor Countess forced herself to banish the recollection of the scenes of despair and tears of a long resistance. She remembered, confusedly, the fire in the little village, then Chaverny, the Huguenot, in prison, threatened with death and awaiting a horrible fate. Then came that frightful evening, when her mother, pale and dying, threw herself at her feet. Jeanne might save her cousin. She consents. It is night; the Count, returning bloodstained from the fray, finds everything ready; then priest, candles, church! Jeanne is sacrificed. Scarcely had she bidden farewell to her cousin, liberated.

"Chaverny, if you love me, see me no more!"

She hears the noise of the departing footsteps of her noble friend, who has never again crossed her path; but she keeps at the bottom of her heart his last look, which appears to her so often in dreams to gladden them. Like a mouse in the cage of a lion, the young woman is in constant fear of the claws of the master, always raised against her. The Countess felt it almost a crime when she sometimes wore the dress in which she first saw her lover. To-day, if she wished to be happy, she must forget the past, think no more of the future.

"I do not believe I am guilty," she said to herself; "but if I seem so in the eyes of the Count, am I not as bad as if I were?" This, although the poor Countess had no reason to doubt the legitimacy of her unborn child. Her wedding day appeared to her in all its horror, and in its train so many unhappy hours!

"Ah! poor Chaverny!" cried she, weeping, "so gentle, so gracious; you were always so good to me!"

She turned her eyes on her husband, as if to persuade herself again that those features promised mercy. The Count was awake. His yellowish eyes, piercing like a tiger's, shone out from under his bushy eyebrows, and his gaze had never been keener than at that moment. The Countess, frightened at having encountered this look, slid under the counterpane, and lay motionless.

"Why are you weeping?" asked the Count, quickly turning back the sheet under which his wife was hidden.

His voice, always so terrifying to her, had at this moment a seeming gentleness which appeared to her to be of good augury.

"I am suffering very much," replied she.

"Well, little one, is it a crime to suffer? Why do you tremble when I look at you? Alas! what must one do to be loved?" The lines of his forehead contracted over the eyebrows. "But I see well enough that I always frighten you," added he, with a sigh.

Counselled by the instinct possessed by frail creatures, the Countess interrupted the Count with sobbing and cried:

"Hear, it is the pains of childbirth. I walked about the rocks all the evening; I have overtired myself no doubt."

At these words, the Count d'Herouville gave his wife such a suspicious look that she reddened and shivered. He took for an expression of remorse the fear with which he inspired this gentle creature.

"Probably it is only an ordinary case," he said.

"Well?" she asked.

"Well, in any case, we must have a skilful leech, and I am going in search of one."

The sinister look which accompanied these words froze the Countess; she fell back on the bed heaving a sigh, wrung from her rather by the presentiment of her fate than by the anguish of the approaching crisis. This sob put the finishing touches on the Count's suspicions. Affecting a calm, which the accents of his voice, his gestures and his looks belied, he rose hurriedly, wrapped himself in a robe which he found on an armchair, and began by closing a door near the fireplace, which communicated with the state and reception apartments and led to the grand staircase. On seeing her husband take possession of the key of this door, the Countess had a presentiment of evil; she heard him open the door opposite that which he had just locked, and enter another chamber, in which the Counts d'Herouville slept when they did not care to honor their wives with their noble company. The Countess knew of the primary use of this chamber only by hearsay; jealousy kept her husband near her. If some military expedition obliged him to leave, the Count kept the movements of his wife closely watched, as if to emphasize his outrageous suspicions. In spite of the care which the Countess took to hear the slightest noise, she no longer heard anything. The Count was now in a long gallery adjoining his room, and which occupied the western wing of the building. The Cardinal d'Herouville, his great-uncle, an enthusiastic collector of books, had there gathered a library as remarkable for the number as for the beauty of its volumes, and from motives of caution he had attached to the walls one of those inventions which have their origin in monastic solitude or timidity. A silver chain was connected by invisible wires with a bell, which hung at the bedside of a faithful servant. The Count pulled the chain, and the clanking of spurs on the stairs of a high turret, which flanked the castle on the side toward the sea, soon gave notice of the approach of one of his followers. As he heard the man ascend the stair, the Count drew back the bolts of the secret door connecting the gallery with the turret, and admitted into this sanctuary of learning a man-at-arms, whose stout appearance denoted a worthy follower of his master. The squire, scarcely awake, seemed to have walked by instinct; the horn lantern he carried in his hand lighted the long gallery so feebly that his master and he looked like two ghosts in the semi-darkness.

"Saddle my charger at once, and prepare to accompany me." This order was given in a deep voice which awoke the dormant intelligence of the retainer. He raised his eyes to his master and encountered so piercing a look, that it struck him like an electric shock. "Bertrand," added the Count, placing his right hand on the man's arm, "you will take off your breastplate and don the uniform of a captain of the Spanish guard."

"Good God, Monseigneur, disguise myself as a partisan of the League! Excuse me, I will obey you, but I would as lief be hanged."

Flattered on his weak point—for he was a fanatic—the Count smiled; but, to counterbalance the smile, which was not in keeping with his mood, he replied brusquely—

"We must ride with the speed of a cannon ball. You must be ready when I am. I shall ring again."

Bertrand bowed in silence and went; but, as he heard the storm raging, he said to himself—

"All the devils are out to-night, by Heaven! I would have been surprised to see this one remaining at home. It was during just such a storm that we took Saint-Lo."

The Count found in his room the costume which he usually used when he wished to disguise himself. After having donned his shabby doublet, which looked as if it might have belonged to one of the poor troopers of Henri IV., who rarely received their pay, he returned to the room in which his wife was groaning.

"Try to bear the pain patiently," said he. "I will kill my horse, if need be, to return the quicker, that your suffering may be eased."

These words had nothing of menace in them, and the Countess, emboldened, prepared to ask a question, when the Count turned to her—

"Can you tell me where your masks are kept?"

"My masks," replied she. "Good God! what do you want with them?"

"Where are your masks?" he repeated with his ordinary roughness.

"In the chest," said she.

The Countess could not repress a shudder when she saw her husband choose a half-mask, the use of which was as common among ladies of that period as is that of gloves at the present day. The Count was quite unrecognizable in an old gray felt hat, with a broken cock's feather. He clasped a large leather belt about his waist, through which he stuck a dagger which he did not usually carry. These strange garments lent him such a terrible appearance, and he came up to the bed with such a strange movement, that the Countess feared her last hour was come.

"Ah, do not kill us!" cried she, "leave me my child, and I will love you well."

"Do you not feel yourself guilty, offering me as a ransom for your sins the love which should be mine already?"

The Count's voice had a sinister ring under the velvet; his bitter words were accompanied by a look as heavy as lead, which crushed the Countess as it fell upon her.

"Oh!" cried she, sorrowfully, "must innocence be sacrificed?"

"It is not a question of your death," replied her husband, coming out of the revery into which he had fallen, "but that you do exactly, for love of me, what I now require of you." He threw on the bed one of the two masks that he had in his hand, and smiled disdainfully as he saw the involuntary gesture of fear which escaped his wife at the light contact of the black velvet. "What a puny child you will give me!" cried he. "See that your features are concealed under this mask when I return," he added. "It does not suit me that a common creature should boast of having seen the Countess d'Herouville."

"But why have a man for this office?" she cried in a low voice.

"Oho! my sweetheart, am I not master here?" replied the Count.

"What matters a mystery more or less!" cried the Countess in despair.

But her husband had disappeared.

In one of those short moments of calm in the fury of the storm, she heard the galloping of two horses that seemed to fly across the perilous dunes and rocks upon which the old mansion was situated, but this sound was at once drowned in the noise of the beating of the waves. Soon she found herself a prisoner in the gloomy apartment, alone in the middle of the silent night, and without succor in the misfortune which she felt was threatening her. The Countess searched her mind for some ruse which might save this child conceived in tears, and which had already become her sole consolation and the hope of all her future. Sustained by a courage such as only mothers know, she took up the little horn with which her husband called together his followers, and blew a feeble blast, the sound of which was lost over the vast waste of waters like a bubble blown into the air by a child. She soon saw the futility of this unheard plaint, and began to walk up and down the rooms, hoping that all the doors might not be locked. When she reached the library she sought, but in vain, for some secret passage; she crossed the long gallery, and from the window which opened on the court again awoke the echoes with the horn, but it was useless against the voice of the tempest. In her discouragement she thought of confiding in one of her women servants, though all were in the pay of her husband; but she saw that the Count had locked the door which led to their apartments. This was a horrible discovery. The elaborate precautions taken to isolate her surely pointed to the intended commission of some terrible deed. In the degree in which the Countess lost hope did her sufferings become more acute. The presentiment of a possible murder, united to the fatigue of her efforts, deprived her of her little remaining strength. She resembled a drowning man, so far gone that he succumbs to a wave less formidable than many which he has previously surmounted. She no longer counted time. Just as she lost all hope, the Count arrived. The man appeared to her like a demon claiming the soul he has bought at the expiration of the compact. He growled as he saw that his wife's face was uncovered; but, after quickly masking her, he took her up in his arms and placed her on the bed.

The fright given the Countess by his appearance made her forget her pain for a moment, and she threw a furtive look at the actors in this mysterious scene. She did not recognize Bertrand, who was masked as carefully as was his master. After having lighted several candles, the light from which mingled with the first rays of the sun, which were reddening the casement windows, the man went over to the window and leaned against the angle of the embrasure. There, with his face turned toward the wall, he seemed to estimate its thickness, and, in his immobility, one might have taken him for the statue of a knight. In the middle of the room the Countess perceived a little fat man, all out of breath, whose eyes were bandaged and whose features were so distorted by fright that it was impossible to make a guess at their habitual expression.

"As you hope to live, sir clown," said the Count, uncovering his eyes by a quick movement which caused the bandage to fall around his neck, "I do not advise you to look at anything but the wretched creature upon whom you are to exercise your skill, otherwise I will hurl you into the river which flows underneath these windows, after having presented you with a diamond necklace weighing at least a hundredweight!" And he meaningly jerked the bandage, which was now around the neck of his stupefied listener. "Now, do your duty; if the child is living, bring it to me."

After this speech, the Count seized the poor man by the middle, lifted him as if he were a feather, and placed him before the Countess. Then he went over to one of the windows, on which he tapped with his fingers, as one who plays a tambourine, looking alternately at his retainer, the bed and the ocean, as though he intended that the sea should be the cradle of the expected child.

The man whom the Count and Bertrand, by the most brutal violence, had just roused out of as sweet a slumber as ever man enjoyed, to throw him on a horse which rode as if pursued by a hundred devils, was a personage whose physiognomy was typical of the time in which he lived, and whose influence was soon to be felt by the House of Herouville.

At no time was the nobility less instructed in natural science, and never had astrology such an important place, because knowledge of the future was never so much desired. This general curiosity and ignorance had brought about the greatest confusion in the human mind; practice was everything, because even the nomenclature of theory was lacking; printing was too expensive, and science was communicated but slowly; the Church still persecuted those sciences which were based on the analysis of natural phenomena, and persecution bred mystery. Therefore, for the poor people as well as for the great, physician and alchemist, mathematician and astronomer, astrologer and necromancer, were all attributes which were blended in the person of the physician. In those days the more skilful physician was suspected of cultivating magic; even to heal his patients, he must consult horoscopes. Besides, princes took these geniuses who revealed the future under their protection, lodged and pensioned them. The famous Cornelius Agrippa, who came to France to be the physician of Henri II., was dismissed by Catherine de' Medici, because he would not foretell the future, as did Nostradamus, who replaced him by Cosmo Ruggieri. Men ahead of the age in which they lived were not justly appreciated; they all inspired that terror which was felt for the occult sciences and their consequences.

Without being quite one of these famous mathematicians, the man brought home by the Count enjoyed in Normandy the reputation of a physician charged with dangerous cases. This man was the kind of sorcerer who was called a bone-setter, a term which is still used by peasants in some parts of France. The name belonged to persons who, without apparent study, but by hereditary knowledge, and often by long practice, could set bones; that is to say, they reset broken arms and legs, doctored animals and human beings of certain maladies, and were thought to possess marvellous secrets for the treatment of severe cases. Not only had Antoine Beauvouloir—for such was the name of the leech

—inherited important traditions from his father and grandfather, who were both famous practitioners, but he was also skilled in medicine, and had devoted some attention to the natural sciences. Country people saw his study full of books and strange objects, which gave his success a taint of magic. Although he had not exactly a sorcerer's reputation, Antoine Beauvouloir was treated with a respect, within thirty leagues of his house, which had something in it of terror; and, a very dangerous thing for him, he had acquired secrets of life and death concerning the noble families of the neighborhood. Now, in these troublous times of much license and little controlled passions, the nobility were frequently obliged to initiate Master Antoine Beauvouloir into terrible and shameful secrets. As his safety depended upon his discretion, he could be trusted; therefore his clientele paid him well, so that his fortune grew by leaps and bounds. Always on the go, sometimes surprised, as he had just been by the Count, sometimes obliged to pass several days at some great house, he was still unmarried; besides, his reputation had prevented several young women from marrying him.

This good man possessed an excellent heart under the deceptive exterior of a light-hearted disposition, which harmonized with his chubby face and plump figure, with the vivacity of his little, fat body and the frankness of his talk. He wished to marry and have a daughter who might confer his riches upon some poor gentleman, for he did not love his calling, and he wished to raise his family from a situation in which it was so disagreeably affected by the prejudices of the time. His character, however, was well suited to the banquets which crowned his principal operations. The effect of always feeling himself the most important guest had added to his constitutional gayety a touch of vanity. But his impertinences were almost always well received at critical moments, when he liked to operate with a certain pompous dignity. In addition to this, he was as inquisitive as an old woman, as gluttonous as a greyhound, and in story-telling he could hold his own with a diplomat, who knows the art of talking without betraying confidences. With these exceptions he passed for one of the most upright men in Normandy. Although he belonged to the small group of men in advance of the age in which they lived, the good sense of a Normandy countryman kept him from misusing his knowledge.

On finding himself in a position in which he was expected to use his skill, the leech recovered his presence of mind. He began to feel the pulse of the masked lady, not that he was thinking of her, but that, on pretence of examining her, he might reflect upon his situation. In none of the criminal and shameful intrigues in which his services had been secured by force had such elaborate precautions been taken as in this case. Although his life was frequently set against the success of his treatment, never had he been in such danger as at this moment. But, in spite of all, he resolved to find out who were his employers, and thus gain some information as to the extent of his danger, that he might the better insure the safety of his valuable person.

"What ails you, then?" he asked the Countess in a low tone.

"Do not give him the child."

"Speak louder," said the Count in a voice of thunder, which prevented Master Beauvouloir from hearing the last word of his patient. "Otherwise," added the Count, carefully disguising his voice, "you may as well say your prayers."

"Cry out louder," said the leech to the lady. "Cry! By the Mass! the man's necklace will suit you no better than it will me! Courage, my little lady!"

"Take care!" said the Count again.

"Monsieur is jealous!" replied the surgeon in a low, metallic tone, which was fortunately drowned by the cries of the Countess.

"Give me the child," said the Count, with a calm which was more terrifying even than his anger.

"Do not give it to him, in the name of God!" gasped the mother, and this cry, which was almost savage, awoke in the heart of the little man a brave generosity, which attached him, perhaps more than he knew, to the nobly born child denied by its father.

Surprised that it did not cry, the leech looked at the babe, believing it to be already dead; the Count also perceived it, and in a single stride was upon him.

"By all the Saints! will you give it to me?" cried the Count, seizing the innocent victim, who wailed feebly.

"Take care, he is malformed, and with scarce any vitality," said Beauvouloir, taking hold of the Count's arm. "It is without doubt a seven months' child!" Then, with a strength given him by a sort of exaltation, he arrested the father's hand, and whispered in his ear: "Spare yourself a crime, it will not live."

"Rascal!" replied the Count angrily, from whose grasp the leech had snatched the child, "who told you that I wished the death of my son? Can you not see me caressing him?"

"Then wait till he is eighteen years old before you fondle him in such a fashion," replied Beauvouloir, reassuming his important manner. "But," he added, thinking of his own safety, for he had recognized the Count d'Herouville, who, in his rage, had forgotten to disguise his voice, "baptize him without delay, and do not speak of what I have just told you, or you will kill its mother."

The secret joy betrayed by the Count in a gesture which had escaped him when the death of the infant was prophesied had suggested this phrase to the leech, and succeeded in saving the child. Beauvouloir hastened to carry it to the mother, who had fainted, and he pointed to her with an ironical gesture, to frighten the Count by the state into which the scene through which they had just passed had brought her. The Countess had heard everything, for it not uncommonly happens that, in great crises, the human organs acquire an extraordinary sensitiveness. However, the cries of her child placed on the bed brought her back to consciousness like magic; she thought she heard the voices of angels, when, breaking in upon the sound of her new-born crying, she heard the low voice of the leech, close to her ear:

"Take good care of him, he will live a hundred years. Beauvouloir makes no mistakes."

An ecstatic sigh and a secret clasp of the hand were the recompense of the leech, who, before giving the frail bit of flesh and blood into the arms of its mother, examined the child, to see if the rough handling of the father had injured its delicate organization. The joyful gesture with which the mother received her son, and the menacing look she gave the Count through the holes in her mask, made Beauvouloir shudder.

"She will die if her son is taken away from her too soon," he said to the Count.

During the latter part of this scene, the Lord of Herouville seemed neither to have seen nor heard anything. Motionless, and as if absorbed in profound meditation, he had recommenced to beat against the window-panes with his fingers; but, when he heard the last sentence of the leech, he turned on him with fury, and drew his dagger.

"Miserable clodhopper!" cried he, giving him the appellation with which the Royalists were prone to insult the followers of the League. "Impudent boor! Science, to which you owe the honor of occasionally consorting with gentlemen, hardly restrains me from ridding Normandy of its sorcerer forever." To the great relief of Beauvouloir, the Count replaced his dagger in its sheath. "Can you not," continued the Count, "when, for once in your life, you find yourself in the honorable society of a lord and his lady, refrain from the suspicion of those low motives which you attribute to the rabble with whom you associate, forgetting that there may be good reasons for secrecy among the better class. Is it not possible that I may have, in this matter, State reasons for acting secretly? Kill my son? Snatch him from his mother's arms? What idle trash! Are you mad? Why frighten us about a vigorous child? Scoundrel, understand that I scorn your poor vanity. If you had known the name of the lady lying there, you would have been proud to have seen her. You might have killed the mother or the child by your absurd precautions. But remember this, your miserable life shall be answerable both for your discretion and their health."

The leech was stupefied by the sudden change which had taken place in the intentions of the Count. This access of tenderness for his child terrified him even more than the impatient cruelty and the gloomy indifference at first manifested by the man. The accent of the Count betrayed a resolve too stern to voice any but a fixed purpose. Master Beauvouloir explained this unexpected change of front by the double promise he had given the mother and father—

"I have it," he said to himself. "This good lord does not wish to appear odious in the eyes of his wife, and uses the apothecary as a sort of special Providence. I must try, then, to warn the lady to watch well over her noble progeny."

Just as he was walking toward the bed, to put his intention into effect, the Count stopped him imperatively. He had a purse in his hand, which he held out to the leech. The latter, not without an uneasy feeling, hastily seized the gold which glittered temptingly through the red silk netting.

"Though you have credited me with the feelings of a villein, that does not prevent me from paying you as a nobleman should. I do not ask your discretion. This man," alluding to Bertrand, "will tell you that wherever there are trees and rivers, there also are to be found my diamonds and necklaces for rascals who prate about me."

As he finished these words, the giant came slowly toward the leech and tendered him a chair, as though inviting him to seat himself alongside the bed of the invalid. The Count sat down.

"Well, sweetheart, so we have a son at last," he continued. "It is a great joy for us. Are you in much pain?"

"No," murmured the Countess.

The mother's surprise and embarrassment and the father's tardy demonstrations of fictitious joy convinced Beauvouloir that some serious incident had escaped his usual alertness; he persisted in his suspicions, and laid his hand on that of the young woman, more for the purpose of giving her some advice, however, than to learn her condition.

"The skin is in a healthy condition," said he. "No relapse is to be feared. The usual fever will probably make its appearance, but do not be alarmed, it will come to nothing."

Here the cunning leech paused and pressed the Countess's hand to draw her attention.

"If you wish to be perfectly easy about your child, Madame," continued he, "you should not leave him for a moment. Nurse him yourself, and shun the apothecary's drugs. How surprising it is that the child is so frail! A shoe would hold him! I am certain that he does not weigh more than fifteen ounces. If you nurse him carefully, you will save him."

These last words were accompanied by another pressure of the hand. In spite of the jets of flame which seemed to dart from the Count's eyes through the holes in his mask, Beauvouloir spoke with the grave deliberation of a man who wishes to earn his pay.

"Oho! master leech, you are forgetting your old felt hat," said Bertrand as he left the room with the surgeon.

The reasons fo· the Count's clemency toward his son emanated from certain notarial clauses. At the moment when Beauvouloir had arrested his hand, the laws of Avarice and Normandy had loomed up before him, and these had subdued his heinous passions. One whispered to him: "Your wife's wealth will not remain in the House of Herouville unless you have a male heir!" The other showed him the Countess dying, and her riches claimed by another branch of the House of Saint-Savin. Both counselled him to leave the child to the care of Nature, and await the birth of a second son, strong and healthy, when he would no longer be dependent on the life of his wife and her first-born. He no longer saw the child, he saw broad lands, and his tenderness suddenly became as strong as his ambition. In his desire to satisfy the requirements of the law, he regretted that this child, born before its time, had not possessed a more robust constitution. The mother, who well knew the character of the Count, was even more surprised than the leech, and her instinctive suspicions were sometimes openly expressed, for maternal courage had doubled her strength.

For some days, the Count was devoted to his wife, and prodigal in attentions, to which interest gave a sort of tenderness. The Countess promptly divined that she alone was the object of all this care. The father's hate for his son was apparent in the most insignificant details. He refrained from either seeing or touching him. When he heard the child crying, he would instantly get up and go off to attend to his affairs; indeed, he seemed to suffer its existence only for the hope of seeing it die. But this dissimulation was too great an effort for the Count. On the day when he saw that the intelligent eye of the mother suspected the danger which threatened her son, he announced the necessity of his speedy departure, on the pretext of leading his soldiers to the aid of the King.

Such were the circumstances which accompanied and preceded the birth of Etienne d'Herouville.

Even though the Count had had no other reason for desiring the death of his son, of whom he believed Chaverny to be the father, poor Etienne would have been no less the object of his aversion. The misfortune of the child's frail and weakly constitution, aggravated, perhaps, by the first paternal caress, was an offence continually wounding his self-respect as a father. If he hated handsome men, he detested just as much feeble creatures whose intelligence made up for their lack of bodily strength. To have pleased him, the boy should have been plain of feature, tall, robust and ignorant. Etienne, whose frailty seemed to point toward the sedentary occupations of learning, must find in his father an ungenerous enemy. His struggle with the giant began at his birth; and for an ally against this dangerous antagonist he had only his mother's love, which increased proportionately, by a beneficent law of nature, as danger threatened him.

As the departure of the Count left her in solitude, Jeanne de Saint-Savin looked to her child for all her remaining joy in life. This son, regarding whose legitimacy she was wrongfully accused, the Countess loved as women love the child of an illicit love. Although she was obliged to nurse him, it did not fatigue her. She would not be aided in any way by her maid: she dressed and undressed her child herself, tasting new joys with every little devotion he required. The incessant occupation, the necessity of care at all hours, the punctuality with which she was compelled to rise in the night to attend to her child, were a source of pleasure without end. Happiness shone from her features whenever she fulfilled a wish of the little one. As Etienne had come into the world prematurely, proper garments were lacking; these she insisted upon making herself, and she made them. With what care, you alone know, you mothers who, in the silence of the night, have worked for your dear children! Every motion of the needle was a dedication, and a thousand tender thoughts were embroidered on the cloth with every pretty pattern! All these follies were reported to the Count d'Herouville, and they served to increase his anger. The days were not long enough for the many activities and the elaborate precautions of the mother; they sped by full of joyful satisfaction to her.

The leech's prescriptions and advice were always written in the presence of the Countess. She suspected her servants, and would have cheerfully gone without sleep so as to be sure that no one came near Etienne, who slept by her side, during her slumbers. During the absence of the Count, she ventured to send for the leech, whose name she well remembered. For her, Beauvouloir was a man to whom she owed an immense debt of gratitude; but, above all, she wanted to ask him a thousand things about her son. In the event of an attempt being made to poison Etienne, how could she avert it? How could she improve his delicate health? Must he be nursed for a long time yet? If she died, would Beauvouloir undertake to watch over the health of the poor little babe?

To these questions of the Countess, Beauvouloir, who was much affected, replied that he dreaded the possibility of Etienne being poisoned as much as she did, but that the Countess need have nothing to fear on this point so long as she was nursing him; afterward, he recommended her to taste all the food given to the child.

"If, Madame," added the leech, "you find that any of the food has a sharp, strong or bitter taste—in short, anything that seems to you peculiar—send it back. Have the child's clothes washed in your presence, and take charge of the key of the wardrobe in which they are kept. And, whatever happens, send for me, and I will come."

The words of the leech impressed themselves on Jeanne's heart, and in gratitude she told him that he could count on her as a friend whenever she might be in a position to serve him. Beauvouloir then confessed to her that she possessed the key to his happiness.

He related to the Countess how the Lord of Herouville, who could not get any ladies of his own rank to listen to his wooing, had loved in his youth a woman named the Belle Romaine. This woman, whom he had deserted, had come to Rouen to endeavor to persuade the Count to do something for her daughter, but the Count would not listen to her. The woman died shortly afterward, and the poor child, Gertrude, more beautiful even than her mother, was received by the Sisters of the Convent of Clarisses, the mother superior of whom was a Mademoiselle Saint-Savin, aunt of the Countess. Having been called to attend Gertrude, Beauvouloir had fallen violently in love with her.

"If, Madame," continued Beauvouloir, "you will interest yourself in this matter, you will not only repay the slight service which you think you owe me, but I shall consider myself deeply in your debt. Moreover, my coming to the chateau, which the Count looks upon with suspicion, will then be justified, and, sooner or later, the Count will surely interest himself in such a lovely young girl, and may, perhaps, make me his physician."

The Countess, who had a soft spot in her heart for all true love, promised to help the poor leech. She entered into the matter so heartily that, when her second child was born, thanks to the custom then in vogue of wives being allowed to ask a boon of their husbands on such occasions, she obtained a marriage gift for Gertrude, who, about that time, instead of taking the veil, wedded Beauvouloir. This present, together with the savings of the leech, enabled them to purchase Forcalier, a fine domain quite close to the Herouville estate.

Reassured by the good leech, the Countess found her life taken up with joys unknown to other mothers. Certainly, all women are beautiful with their babes at their breast, hushing their cries, and consoling their first pains; but it would be difficult to behold, even in the pictures of the old Italian masters, a scene more touching than that made by the Countess, when she felt Etienne drawing from her breast the milk which was to be the life of the poor little creature. Her face shone with affection, as she watched the child, almost fearing lest she should discern some likeness to Chaverny, of whom she had dreamed so much, and these thoughts marred her pleasure somewhat.

The look with which she regarded her son, her desire to communicate to him the strength which she felt in her heart, her golden hopes, the gentleness of her gestures, all formed a picture which subjugated the women who surrounded her: the Countess had conquered her jailers.

Soon these two frail creatures were united by the same thought, so that they understood one another even before the child had learned to talk. As soon as Etienne could look about him, with the curiosity natural to children, his gaze encountered the gloomy wainscoting of the great hall. When his young ear began to recognize the differences of sounds, he heard the monotonous beating of the waves against the rocks, with a movement as regular as that of the pendulum of a clock. Thus the surroundings, the sounds, the objects, everything which strikes the sense, prepares the understanding and forms the character, gave him a bent toward melancholy. Was not his mother destined to live and die in the mists of melancholy? From his birth, he might have believed that the Countess was the only creature existing on the earth, that the world was a desert; and grown to habits of egoism, which inclines us to solitude and to finding our happiness in ourselves. Was not the Countess condemned to live a solitary life, and find her all in her son, who, like her lover, was a victim of persecution? Like all children who are often in pain, Etienne's disposition was very gentle, and had a certain resemblance to his mother's. His nerves were so sensitive that a sudden noise, or the presence of a boisterous person, gave him a sort of fever. He might have been one of those little insects for which God seems to moderate the violence of the wind and the heat of the sun; like them, he was incapable of standing against the slightest obstacle; like them, he yielded without resistance or complaint to everything aggressive. This angelic patience inspired the Countess with a sentiment so deep that it made her forget all the fatigue brought about by the many attentions which her son's delicate health required of her.

She thanked God, who had placed Etienne in an atmosphere of rest and quiet, the only one in which he could be brought up safely. Often his mother's hands, so gentle and so strong, lifted him up to one of the windows through which his eyes—blue as his mother's—seemed to study the glories of the ocean. Both would remain for whole hours, gazing at the infinity of the waters, alternately dark and brilliant, silent and thundering. These long meditations were to Etienne an unconscious apprenticeship to mournfulness. Nearly always, at such times, his mother's eyes were full of tears, and, during these sad reveries, the young features of Etienne were wet. Soon his precocious instinct of sorrow revealed to him the power which his childish play possessed over the Countess; he endeavored to divert her by similar caresses to those which she used to lull his sufferings. Never did his little hands, his little stammered words, his bright smiles, fail to disperse the sad reveries of his mother. If he were tired, his delicate instincts prevented him from complaining.

"Poor little sensitive thing!" cried the Countess, seeing him dropping off to sleep from weariness, after a frolic which had succeeded in driving away one of her saddest day-dreams, "where will you be able to live? Who will ever understand you—you, whose tender soul will be wounded by an angry look?—you, who, like your poor mother, will prize a sweet smile above all the riches of the earth? My angel, beloved by your mother, who else will love you? Who will find the treasures hidden under that frail exterior? No one. Like me, you will be alone on earth. God keep you from feeling, as I did, a love favored by God but crushed by man!"

She sighed and wept. The graceful figure of her son, who was sleeping on her knee, brought the semblance of a smile to her lips: she looked at him long, tasting one of those joys which are a secret between a mother and God. Having discovered how much her voice, accompanied by the mandolin, pleased her son, she sang to him the pretty ballads of the time, and fancied she saw on the little red lips the smile with which George de Chaverny used to thank her when she laid down her rebec. She reproached herself with these memories of the past, but she was constantly returning to them. The child, the accomplice of her dreams, seemed to smile at the very melodies which Chaverny had loved.

Until he was eighteen months old, Etienne's feeble health had not permitted the Countess to take him out of doors; but the light color which crimsoned the white of his skin, as though the palest petals of the wild-rose had blown upon his cheek, already attested life and health. Just as she was beginning to believe the predictions of the leech, and was congratulating herself upon having been able, in the absence of the Count, to surround her son with every precaution, in order to preserve him from all risk, letters which she received, written by her husband's secretary, announced his early return. One morning, as the Countess, giving herself up to the mad joy which comes to all mothers when they see their first child walking for the first time, was playing with Etienne one of those games which are as indescribable as the charm of a memory, of a sudden heard the floor creak under a weighty tread. Scarcely had she risen, with a movement of involuntary surprise, than she found herself in the presence of the Count. A cry escaped her, but she tried to remedy this slip by going up to the Count and raising her forehead, with submission, to receive a kiss.

"Why did you not notify me of your arrival?" said she.

"My reception," replied the Count, interrupting her, "might have been more cordial, but probably less frank."

He asked after the child. The state of its health at first drew him him a gesture of surprise mingled with fury; but he suddenly repressed his anger and began to smile.

"I bring you good news," continued he. "I have been made Governor of Champagne, and the King has promised to create me a duke and peer of the realm. Besides, we have come into a fortune; that accursed Huguenot Chaverny is dead."

The Countess turned pale and fell back in her chair. She divined the secret of the sinister joy exhibited on the countenance of her husband, which the sight of Etienne seemed to aggravate.

"Sir," she said in a shaking voice, "you are aware that I loved my cousin Chaverny for long. You will answer to God for the pain you are giving me."

At these words the Count's eyes flamed, his lips trembled, and he could not utter a word, so enraged was he; he threw his dagger on the table with such violence that the steel resounded like a clap of thunder.

"Listen to me," he cried in his great voice, "and remember my words: I wish neither to hear nor see again the little monster you are holding in your arms; he is your child and not mine. Has he one of my features? By the Almighty God! take him out of my sight quickly, or . . ."

"Merciful Heaven," cried the Countess, "protect us!"

"Silence!" roared the giant. "If you do not wish me to destroy him, see that he is never in my path!"

"Then," replied the Countess, who felt the courage to struggle against her tyrant, "swear to me that you will never attempt his life if you never see him. Can I count on your word of honor?"

"What do you mean by that?" continued the Count.

"Well, then, kill us both now!" she cried, throwing herself on her knees and clasping her child to her bosom.

"Rise, Madame! I give you my word as a man of honor to attempt nothing against the life of the malformed brat, so long as he dwells on the rocks which jut into the sea below the house; I shall give him a fisherman's hut for shelter, and the strand for his domain; but, unhappy he if I ever find him outside those limits!"

The Countess began to weep bitterly.

"But look at him," she said. "He is your son."

"Madame!"

At this word the terrified mother snatched up her child, whose heart palpitated like that of a bird taken in its nest by a boy. Either innocence has a charm that even the hardest men cannot resist, or the Count reproached himself for his violence, and feared to plunge into too great despair a creature as necessary to his pleasures as to his plans, for when his wife returned his voice was as gentle as he could make it.

"Jeanne, my sweetheart," said he, "do not take it to heart, give me your hand. One never knows how to deal with you women. I bring you new honors, new riches, by Heaven! and you receive me like a thief dropping among a crowd of bumpkins! My affairs will necessitate long absences; so, at least, sweetheart, you need not give me black looks during my stay here."

The Countess understood the sense of these words, but the apparent gentleness no longer deceived her.

"I know my duty to you," she replied, with melancholy, which the Count took for tenderness.

This timid creature was too pure and too proud to try, like some clever women, to rule the Count by scheming, a species of degradation to which great souls cannot descend. She went out silently to console her despair with the society of her child.

"By all the Saints! am I never to be loved!" cried the Count, who had caught sight of a tear in his wife's eyes, as she left.

The motherly feeling of the Countess, continually threatened, reached the heights of that passion which women throw into an illicit love. By a sort of sorcery, known to all mothers, and which was even stronger than usual between the Countess and her son, she succeeded in making him understand the peril which threatened him, and taught him to shun his father. The terrible scene, of which Etienne had been a witness, was graven in his memory, and bade fair to become a sort of disease with him. He ended by feeling the proximity of the Count with so much certainty that, when his senses warned him that his father was approaching, his brows would contract and his mother's ear was then not more alert than the instinct of her son. As he grew older, this faculty born of terror increased so rapidly that, like the American Indians, Etienne was able to distinguish the step and voice of his father at long distances, and could foresee his coming. Seeing this terror of the Count shared by her child made him even more precious to the Countess; and their union became so close that, like two flowers on the same stalk, they bent under the same blast and were lifted up by the same hopes. They lived one life.

Some time after the Count's departure, another child was born to Jeanne, a fine boy, who, after some months, took on such a perfect resemblance to his father that the Count's hate for the older child became still stronger. For the safety of her favorite son, the Countess consented to all the plans of her husband for the happiness and fortune of Maximilien, the second boy. Etienne, promised to the Church, must become a priest in order to leave Maximilien the wealth and titles of the House of Herouville. At this price, the poor mother insured the peace of her unfortunate first-born.

Never were two brothers more unlike than Etienne and Maximilien. The younger, from his birth, betrayed an inclination for noise, violent exercises and fighting, so that the Count's affection for him was as great as his wife's for Etienne. By a sort of natural and tacit agreement, the husband and wife each took charge of their favored son. The Duke—for about this time Henri IV. rewarded the eminent services of the Lord of Herouville—the Duke did not desire, as he said, to fatigue his wife, so he gave Maximilien to a fine, stout country girl, chosen by Beauvouloir, to nurse. To the great joy of Jeanne de Saint-Savin, he scorned the mother's intelligence as much as her nursing powers, and determined to educate the child to his own taste. He taught Maximilien a holy horror of books and letters; he skilled him in the mechanical and military arts; he made him ride on horseback, fire the musket and use the sword. When his son grew older he took him out with him to the chase, that he might contract the roughness of language, the rudeness of manners, the strength of body, the quickness of look and voice, which would make him, in the Duke's eyes, an accomplished man. The little fellow was, when he was twelve years old, an untamed lion-cub, disliked by all but his father, with authority to tyrannize all the neighborhood, which he did not hesitate to use.

Etienne took up his abode in the house situated on the sea-shore, which his father had given him, and which the Duchess had provided with all the comforts to which he was entitled. The Duchess passed most of the day there. Mother and child would take walks together over the rocks and the shore; she pointed out to Etienne the boundaries of his domain of sand, showed him shells and seaweed; and the terror which she displayed on seeing him go near the water's edge, told him, better than words, that death awaited him beyond. Etienne feared for his mother more than for himself. Soon, even the name of the Duke d'Herouville affected him so much that it seemed to hypnotize him. If he perceived the sinister giant from afar, or heard his voice, the terrible impression revived, produced upon him long ago by his father's curse, and froze his heart. So, like a Laplander, who lives and dies in the midst of his snows, he made a happy home of his hut and his rocks; if he crossed the border line he was seized with an indefinable fear.

When she saw that her child could only find happiness in his solitary surroundings, the Duchess did not regret his fate so much, and encouraged him to devote himself to the pursuits of learning. She sent for Pierre de Sebonde to serve as tutor to the future Cardinal d'Herouville. Although a tonsure was destined for her son, Jeanne de Saint-Savin did not wish his education to savor too much of the Church, and by her influence she had it secularized somewhat. Beauvouloir was charged with the duty of instructing Etienne in the mysteries of the natural sciences. The Duchess, who superintended his studies herself, in order to obviate the overtaxing of the child's strength, taught him Italian as a recreation, and insensibly unfolded to him the poetic riches of that tongue. While the Duke led Maximilien through thick tangles of brush and forest, at the risk of bodily hurt, Jeanne guided Etienne through the milky way of Petrarch's Sonnets, or descended into the gigantic labyrinth of the "Divine Comedy." To compensate Etienne for his infirmities, Nature had endowed him with a voice so melodious that it was difficult to resist the pleasure of listening to it. His mother taught him music, and the tender and pathetic songs, to the accompaniment of a mandolin, were the favorite recreation promised by the mother as a reward for some task demanded by the Abbé de Sebonde. Etienne would listen to his mother with a passionate admiration that she had never seen except in the eyes of Chaverny. The first time that the poor woman found her memories of a young girl renewed in her child's look she covered him with mad kisses. She blushed when Etienne asked her why she seemed to love him so much at that moment; then she replied that she loved him more and more every day. Soon she found, in the education of her son and the cultivation of his mind, the same pleasures that she had enjoyed while nursing him as a child. She wished to make Etienne superior to her in everything, rather than to govern him; perhaps she felt herself so strong in her undying affection that she could conceive of no possibility of failure. There are hearts without tenderness that love domination, but true affection welcomes abnegation of self, which is the virtue of strength. If Etienne did not at first comprehend some demonstration or theory, the poor mother seemed to wish to infuse the knowledge into him, as, long ago, at her breast, she had answered his every little cry. But what a tumult of joy shone in the Duchess's look when she saw Etienne grasp the meaning of things, and make them his own! She proved, as Pierre de Sebonde said, that the mother is a double being, whose sensations always include two existences.

Thus the Duchess increased the natural affection which links a son to his mother by the tenderness of a resuscitated love. Etienne's delicate health necessitated more care than children usually require; she continued to dress him, put him to bed, brush and curl his hair. This toilet was a continual caress; every movement of the comb through his hair meant a kiss. Just as many women like to devote to their lovers little motherly attentions, so this mother tried to treat her son as a lover; she found in him a vague resemblance to her cousin, whom she loved beyond the grave. Etienne was as a phantom of George, seen in the distance of a magic mirror; she told herself that he was more of a nobleman than an ecclesiastic.

"If some woman as tender as I would fall in love with him, he would be very happy!" she often thought.

But the terrible influence which ordained that Etienne should enter the Church would loom up before her mind, and, in tears, she would kiss the locks to be severed by the scissors of the Church. In spite of the unjust agreement made with the Duke, with that foresight which only mothers have she saw Etienne as neither priest nor cardinal. The Duke's forgetfulness allowed her to keep the boy from taking orders.

"There will always be time enough!" said she.

Then, without confessing to herself the thought which had taken root in her heart, she instructed Etienne in the fine manners of courtiers; she wished him to be as gentle and courteous as George de Chaverny was. Reduced to a very small allowance by the Duke, who looked after his household matters himself, and employed all his income for the purposes of his aggrandizement or magnificence, she restricted herself to the simplest of costumes, and spent nothing, in order that she might be able to give her son velvet cloaks, shoes embroidered with lace, and doublets and hose of fine stuffs. Her personal privations gave her that pleasure which is experienced by those who hide their sacrifices from their loved ones. It was a great joy to her to think, while working a ruffle, of the day when it would adorn the neck of her son. She alone took care of his clothes, his linen, his perfume and his toilet articles. She dressed but for him, for she only cared that he should think her beautiful. So many delicate attentions, accompanied by a sentiment which penetrated to the heart of her son and electrified it, had their reward. One day Beauvouloir—who was endeared to Etienne by his teaching, and whose other services were not quite unknown to the boy—whose look was awaited by the Duchess with anxiety every time he examined her frail idol, declared that Etienne might live many a long year, provided no violent emotion should agitate his delicate constitution. Etienne was at that time sixteen years old.

At that age, Etienne was about five feet tall, a height which he was not likely to surpass; but then George de Chaverny was not much taller. His skin, transparent and smooth as that of a girl, showed every line of his blue veins. It was as white as porcelain. His eyes, of a clear blue, and inexpressibly sweet, seemed to implore protection; the soft entreaty of his gaze began the charm which the melody of his voice completed. The most refined modesty was revealed in every feature. His long, auburn hair, fine and glossy, was divided over his forehead and broke into curls. His pale and hollow cheeks and his pure forehead, marked by a few wrinkles, betrayed a natural sorrow which was pitiful to see. His graceful mouth, through which could be seen the whitest of teeth, wore that phantom of a smile which is fixed on the faces of the dying. His hands, white as those of a woman, were remarkably well shaped. Long meditations had given his head the appearance of a drooping flower, but this did not seem unbecoming; it might have been compared to the last touch given to a portrait by a great painter to interpret its meaning. You might have imagined it the head of a young girl placed on the body of a deformed man.

The poetic meditations which cause us to investigate, like a botanist, the vast fields of thought, the fruitful comparison of human ideas, the exaltation arising from the perfect comprehension of works of genius, had become the inextinguishable and tranquil joys of his dreamy and solitary life. Flowers, those charming creations, whose destiny had so much in common with his own, were all loved by him. The Countess, glad to see in her son these innocent passions, which would preserve him from the rude contact of social life, which he could resist no more than the tiniest fish of the ocean washed up on the shore could resist the rays of the sun, encouraged his tastes by bringing him Spanish *romanceros*, Italian *motets*, books, sonnets and all the poets. The library of the Cardinal d'Herouville was the heritage of Etienne; reading was to be his life-work. Every morning the child found his solitude peopled with pretty, rich-colored flowers, giving out the sweetest of perfumes. His reading, to which his delicate health did not permit him to devote himself for long at a time, and his walks among the rocks, were interrupted by guileless reveries which kept him for whole hours seated with his sweet companions, the laughing flowers, or perched in the crevice of some rock studying the mysteries of a strange plant or fragment of moss. He would seek a rhyme in the scented flower, as a bee extracts honey. He would often admire, without being able to explain his pleasure, the delicate threads imprinted on the bright-colored petals, the fine texture of the rich tunics of blue or gold, green or purple, the fret-work so marvellously fine of a calyx or a leaf, whose soft and velvety tissues could be torn, like his own soul, with a touch. As much a thinker as he was a poet, he discovered later the meaning of all these subtle differences; for, day by day, he made progress in the interpretation of the Divine Word, which is written in all creation. These persistent and secret researches into the world of nature gave to his life the apparent somnolence of meditative genius. Etienne would lie on the sand for whole days, happy, an unconscious poet. The sudden appearance of a golden insect, the reflection of the sun in the sea, the shivering of the vast and limpid mirror of the waters, a starfish, a curious shell—all were a delight and a pleasure to this artless soul. To go out to meet his mother, to hear the rustle of her dress from afar, to kiss her, to speak to her, to listen to her, all caused him such keen sensations that often a delay, or the slightest fear, would put him into a fever. Etienne was all soul, and, that his frail and feeble body might not be destroyed by the strong emotions of that soul, he required silence, caresses, the quiet of the meadow, and the love of a woman. For the present, his mother loaded him with love and caresses; the rocks were silent; flowers and books charmed his loneliness; and, lastly, his little realm of sand and shells, pebbles and grass, was to him a world always interesting and always new.

Etienne had all the benefits of a perfectly innocent physical life, and his mind was fed on truth and poetry. Child in stature but man in mind, he was equally angelic as both. By the desire of his mother, his emotions had been raised to an intellectual atmosphere. The action of his life took place, therefore, in the intellectual world, far from the society which would have killed him, or at least given him pain. He lived in his soul and in his intellect.

Having come into contact with human thought from books, he had risen to those great thoughts from which all things come. This idealism, though suited to his nature, would bring sorrow in its train should he ever chance to fall in love. But if Jeanne feared such a calamity, she consoled herself with the thought that he was destined for the Church.

"He will be a cardinal," she would say to herself, "he will live for art and be its patron. He will love art instead of loving a woman, and art will never betray him."

The joys of this sweet motherhood were always imbittered when she thought of Etienne's peculiar position in his family. The two brothers had already grown up without having known or even seen each other. The Duchess had hoped for a long time to bring about a meeting of the brothers during one of the absences of her husband. She had tried to interest Maximilien in Etienne by telling the younger brother how much he was indebted to Etienne for the unjust sacrifices the latter had been forced to make; but this long-cherished hope had disappeared. Indeed, far from desiring a meeting of the brothers, she now feared it even more than an encounter between Etienne and his father. Maximilien, who never believed any good of any one, was afraid that some day Etienne might demand his rights, and the boy was capable of killing his brother at sight. Never had a son less respect for his mother than Maximilien. As soon as he was old enough to understand, he noticed the contempt with which the Duke treated his wife. Though the old Governor still kept up a form of politeness with the Duchess, Maximilien, who was little under his father's influence, caused his mother great anxiety. It was one of Bertrand's duties, therefore, to see that the brothers never met, and, as a matter of fact, Etienne's existence was carefully concealed from Maximilien. Every one in the chateau cordially hated the Marquis de Saint-Sever—the title by which Maximilien was known—and those who were aware of the elder brother's existence looked upon him as an Avenger of God, who would in due time come into his own. Etienne's future, therefore, was veiled in mystery. Perchance he would be persecuted by his brother! The poor Duchess had no relatives to whom she could confide the life and interests of her darling. Such thoughts as these, and her melancholy existence, full of secret sorrows, were certain to affect a naturally fragile constitution. Her disposition required the most delicate attentions, and her surroundings were of the roughest. Besides, what mother's heart would not have been tortured at seeing her first-born, a man of intellect and feeling, in whom the first signs of genius were beginning to make themselves manifest, stripped of his inheritance, while his younger brother, coarse and without any good qualities whatever, came into the title and property! The glory of the House of Herouville was about to pass away. The gentle Jeanne de Saint-Savin, incapable of complaint, could only weep and pray; but she often raised her eyes to heaven as if to ask the meaning of the terrible judgment upon her. Her eyes filled with tears when she thought that at her death her son would be an orphan, and would be without protection against the brutalities of a brother who cared for neither God nor man. So many misunderstood feelings, so many unshared sorrows—for she concealed her deepest griefs from her child—had undermined her constitution and developed a decline which became more serious every day, and which finally brought on consumption. She tried to enlighten the Duke concerning Maximilien's education and was rebuffed; she could do nothing to arrest the odious tendencies which were beginning to show themselves in the boy. Her ailment became so serious that it necessitated the installation of Beauvouloir as physician of the House of Herouville and of the Government of Normandy. The old leech took up his residence at the chateau. At that period, such appointments were generally received by scientists, who thus found the necessary leisure and means to enable them to carry on their studies. Beauvouloir had coveted the appointment for some time, for his knowledge and his fortune had made him many rich and powerful enemies. In spite of the protection of an influential family to which he had rendered a valuable service, he had been recently implicated in a criminal suit, and only the intervention of the Governor of Normandy, at the instigation of the Duchess, had saved him. The Duke did not have cause to repent this act: Beauvouloir healed the Marquis de Saint-Sever of an illness so dangerous that any other physician would surely have given him up. But the Duchess was too far gone for any hope of recovery.

"What will become of my poor child without me?" was the thought which always brought with it a flood of bitterness.

At last, when she could no longer leave her bed, the Duchess sank slowly toward the grave; for now she had not the society of her son, who was denied entrance to the chateau by the compact to which he owed his life. The grief of the child equalled his mother's. Inspired by the genius peculiar to creatures of his timid nature, Etienne studied the faculties of the voice with as much diligence as the most cultivated singers, and when, by a sign, Beauvouloir had let him know that his mother was alone, he would stand underneath her windows and sing to her the melodies she loved so well.

"Those songs give me life!" the Duchess would say to Beauvouloir, when she heard Etienne singing beneath her window.

At last the moment arrived which was to begin the child's long mourning. He had already felt a mysterious connection between his emotions and the movement of the ocean. His knowledge of the forces of nature made this phenomenon more eloquent to him than to others. On the evening when he was about to see his mother for the last time the ocean was stirred by movements which seemed to him most strange. Great waves dashed up against the rocks and broke with a sound like the wailing of dogs in pain. Etienne said to himself—

"What does it want of me? It heaves and groans like a living creature! My mother has often told me that the ocean was horribly convulsed on the night of my birth. Surely something is about to happen to me!"

This thought kept him with his face against the window of his cabin, gazing now at the light which shone in his mother's window, and now at the moaning sea. All at once Beauvouloir tapped gently on the door, opened it and entered. His face was clouded, showing that he brought bad news.

"Sir," said he, "the Duchess is sinking fast and wishes to see you. All precautions have been taken, so that you will run no risk at the chateau. But you must be very cautious; we shall be obliged to pass through the Duke's chamber—the one in which you were born."

These words brought tears to Etienne's eyes.

"The ocean told me!" he said.

He allowed himself to be led mechanically to the gate of the turret which Bertrand had ascended on the night of Etienne's birth. The old retainer was there, a lantern in his hand. Etienne soon reached the great library of the Cardinal d'Herouville, where he was obliged to remain with Beauvouloir, while Bertrand went forward to open the doors and ascertain whether the boy could pass without danger; but the Duke did not awake. As Etienne cautiously walked across the floor, not a sound was to be heard but the feeble moan of the dying woman. It was on just such a night that Etienne was born. The same tempest, the same agonies, the same fear of awakening the pitiless giant, who, this time, slept on. To guard against all risk, the retainer took Etienne in his arms and crossed the room of his terrible master, resolved to excuse himself with some pretext based on the Duchess's state if he were discovered. Etienne felt a horrible tightening at his heart when he saw the fear manifested by these two faithful retainers; but this feeling prepared him, so to speak, for the spectacle which met his gaze in the little room to which he was returning for the first time since his father's curse had banished him. When he saw his beloved mother he scarcely recognized her, so wasted was she. Pale as death itself and almost at her last breath, she called up all her strength to take her son's hands, and tried to put all her soul into a long look, as, in days gone by, Chaverny had given her his life in a farewell. Beauvouloir and Bertrand, the child and the mother, the sleeping Duke—all were together again. It was the same place, the same scene, the same actors; but the joys of maternity had given place to mourning for the dying, and the dawn of a new life was changed to the dusk of death.

At that moment the tempest announced by the ominous groanings of the sea at sundown burst upon them.

"Dear flower of my life," said Jeanne de Saint-Savin, kissing her son on the forehead, "you were given to me in the midst of a storm, and it is in the midst of a storm that we part. Between these two storms my life has known nothing but trouble, except the hours that I have spent with you. Adieu, my only love; adieu, fair image of two souls soon to be united; adieu, my dearest, my only joy; adieu, my well-beloved!"

"Let me follow you!" cried Etienne, who was kneeling by his mother's bed.

"That would be a better fate," said she, as two tears rolled down her livid cheeks, for, as in bygone days, she seemed to be able to read the future. Then she suddenly turned to the two men. "No one has seen him?" she asked them.

Just then the Duke turned in his bed; they all trembled.

"Even my last joy is imbittered!" said the Duchess. "Take him away! Take him away!"

"To stay with you a moment longer I would willingly die!" moaned the poor child, and fainted on the bed.

At a sign from the Duchess, Bertrand took Etienne in his arms and showed him for the last time to his mother, who, with a long look, kissed him.

"Love him well," said she to the retainer and the leech, "for his only protectors will be you and Heaven."

Prompted by an instinct which is never at fault in a mother, she had seen the pity with which Bertrand looked at her first-born; he worshipped him with a veneration comparable to that of the Jews for the Holy City. As to Beauvouloir, the compact between the Duchess and him had been signed long ago. These two retainers, touched at seeing their mistress forced to leave her noble child in their care, swore to protect their young master, and the mother believed their oath.

The Duchess died some hours afterward; she was mourned by her retainers, who said of her that she was an angel from heaven.

Etienne was seized with the deepest and most enduring grief. He no longer rambled about the rocks; he no longer read or sang. He would remain for whole days crouched under some rock, motionless, indifferent to the weather, resembling a piece of moss clinging to a rock. He did not weep much, but lay for hours, lost in thought as deep as the ocean, and which, like the ocean, took a thousand shapes, becoming terrible, tempestuous and calm. It was more than a grief, it was a new existence, an irrevocable fate.

In his old age Bertrand had acquired some authority over the servants in the house. His lodging was quite near the hut in which Etienne slept, and he had taken it upon himself to look after the boy with that simple and persistent affection which is peculiar to old soldiers. He carefully abstained from his usual roughness of speech when speaking with Etienne. In wet weather he would go after the boy wherever he might be lying, raise him up, and gently lead him back to his hut. He tried to take the place of the Duchess as far as lay in his power, and the boy received from him as many little attentions, if not as much love, as the Duchess had bestowed upon him.

Etienne took the cares of the squire as a matter of course, but too many ties had been broken between him and his fellow-creatures for any warm affection to find a place in his heart. He became a sort of intermediate creature between man and the plant, or perhaps between man and God. To what can we liken a being to whom the social distinctions and the false sentiments of the world were unknown, and who, in his charming innocence, obeyed only the dictates of his heart? Nevertheless, in spite of his gloomy melancholy, he soon felt the need of love and sympathy; but, shut off as he was from civilization by an iron barrier, it was almost impossible for him to find a companion to whom he could communicate his thoughts. He ended by making the ocean his confidant. The sea became to him a loving and thinking creature. Familiar from his cradle with the infinity of the watery wastes, he felt the marvellous poetry of the sea and the heavens. To him all was variety in that vast expanse, so monotonous in appearance. Like all men in whom the mind dominates the body, he had extraordinary powers of vision. Even in a perfect calm, none of the myriad tints of the sea would escape him. At such times the face of the waters would have all the characteristics of a woman's face —its smiles, frowns and caprices; green and gray, here, laughing in a blue frolic, there, blending its brilliant colors with the faint tints of the horizon, and again sparkling placidly under golden clouds. There were gorgeous festivals, splendid in the sunset, when the great orb shed its crimson over the waves like a mantle of shimmering silk. To him the sea, in its varying moods, was gay or sprightly, resigned or sad. He was master of the silent language of the great ocean. Its ebb and flow were to him like a heaving breast, whose every sigh betokened a sentiment; he understood the secrets of its soul.

No mariner or scientist could predict better than he the coming of a storm; he knew the portent of the ocean's slightest change; he could foretell a tempest by the way the surf broke on the rocks.

II

HOW THE SON DIED

IN THE YEAR 1617, twenty or more years after the horrible night during which Etienne had come into the world, the Duke d'Herouville, now seventy-five years old, worn-out and broken down, was seated at sunset before the arched window of the bedroom, in the very spot where years ago the Countess had so vainly called for succor in her distress. His bold features, whose sinister expression had disappeared with age and suffering, were ghastly pale, and his white, tumbled hair contrasted strangely with the yellow skull over which it fell. War and fanaticism, though tempered by religious feeling, still gleamed in his eyes. Religious devotions had given a monastic expression to the face which had been formerly so forbidding. The rays of the setting sun bathed in crimson the yet vigorous features.

"Enough," he said to his chaplain.

The old divine, who was standing respectfully before his master, was reading the Gospel to him. The Duke, resembling an old menagerie lion, majestic even in age, turned to another white-haired man who was in the room, and held out to him an emaciated but still sinewy arm.

"It is your turn now, bone-setter," said he. "How am I to-day?"

"You are doing well, my Lord, and the fever has disappeared. You have still many a long year to live."

"I should like to see Maximilien here," continued the Duke with a smile. "The brave lad! The King has given him a company of musketeers. The Marshal d'Ancre has taken good care of the boy, and our gracious Queen Marie has promised to look out for a good match for him, now that he has been created Duke of Nivron. My name will be worthily continued. The boy has performed prodigies of valor in the field. . . ."

At that moment Bertrand came into the room with a letter in his hand.

"What is this?" asked the old Lord.

"A despatch brought by a courier from the King," replied the retainer.

"The King and not the Queen-mother!" cried the Duke. 'What can have happened? Can the Huguenots have taken up arms again? By the Blood of all the Saints!" continued the Duke, drawing himself up and looking proudly at the three old men, "I will lead forth my soldiers again, and, with Maximilien at my side, Normandy. . . ."

"My Lord, I beg you to be seated," said the old leech, uneasy at seeing the Duke exerting himself in a manner so dangerous to a convalescent.

"Read, Master Corbineau," said the old man, giving the missive to his confessor.

The three men standing around the old Duke as he sat in his armchair cast anxious looks at one another, which betrayed a thought which they dared not put into words. In the strong light of the last rays of the setting sun, these silent men formed a remarkable and melancholy picture, full of contrasts. The dark and gloomy room, in which nothing had been changed for twenty-five years, fitly framed this scene of a passion tempered by religion and saddened by death.

"The Marshal d'Ancre has been killed on the Bridge of the Louvre by the King's command. . . . Oh! my God!"

"Read on!" cried the old lord.

"The Duke of Nivron . . ."

"Well?"

"Is dead!"

The Duke's head sank upon his breast and he heaved a deep sigh. The three old men looked at one another. It seemed to them that the rich and powerful House of Herouville was about to disappear before their eyes like a sinking ship.

"The Lord on High," said the Duke, raising his eyes, in which shone a terrible light, "is ungrateful to me. He has forgotten all that I have done for his Holy Cause!"

"God requites," said the priest gravely.

"Put that man in the dungeon!" cried the Duke.

"It is easier to silence me than to appease your conscience."

The Duke d'Herouville suddenly became thoughtful.

"My House perish? My name disappear? I shall marry and have a son!" he said after a long pause.

Although the expression despair had painted on the Duke's features was frightful to behold, the "bone-setter" could not repress a smile.

At that moment, a song as fresh as the sea breeze and as pure as the skies was heard above the murmur of the ocean. The sadness of the voice and the charm of its words were wafted to the soul like a perfume. The music filled the air with its plaint, yet seemed to console in its very sorrow. The voice harmonized with the washing of the surf so perfectly that it seemed to rise from the bosom of the waters.

This song sounded sweeter to the old men than the most tender words of love could have sounded to a maiden; it expressed so many pure hopes that it found an echo in the heart like a voice from Heaven.

"What is that?" asked the Duke.

"It is the little nightingale singing," said Bertrand, "all is not lost either for him or for us."

"What do you mean by a nightingale?"

"It is the name we have given your first-born son," replied Bertrand.

"My son!" cried the old man. "Then I have a son—a son who will bear and perpetuate my name?"

He rose from his chair and began to walk up and down the room; then, with an imperative gesture, he dismissed Bertrand and the leech, and remained alone with the priest.

The next morning the Duke, leaning on the arm of his old retainer, walked down to the beach and among the rocks, seeking his disowned son. He soon caught sight of him, perched in a crevice in the rock, lying carelessly in the sun, his head resting on a clump of grass and his feet gracefully curled under his body. He resembled a swallow at rest. As soon as he heard the sound of the Duke's footsteps on the pebbly beach, Etienne turned his head, cried out like a frightened bird, and seemed to disappear into the granite, like a mouse which vanishes into its hole so quickly that one almost doubts having seen it at all.

"By the Blood of all the Saints! where has the boy hidden himself?" cried the Duke when he reached the rock on which he had seen his son.

"There he is," said Bertrand, pointing to a cleft in the rock, the edges of which had been worn smooth by the action of the waves.

"Etienne, my beloved son!" cried the old man. The disowned child did not respond. During the greater part of the morning the Duke entreated, threatened and stormed without success. At last, tired of pleading, he applied his ear to the crevice, but all he heard was the beating of Etienne's heart, whose fevered pulsation resounded in the cavern.

"He lives, at all events," said the old man, pitifully.

At noon the father, in despair, had recourse to a last prayer.

"Etienne," said he, "my dear Etienne, God has punished me for having banished you! He has taken your brother from me! Now you are my only child. I love you better than I love myself. I have repented my sin. I know now that my own blood flows in your veins as well as that of your mother, whose unhappiness was all my work. Come, I will try to make you forget the wrongs you have suffered by loving you the more. Etienne, you are already Duke of Nivron; after me you will be Duke d'Herouville, Peer of France, Knight of the Golden Fleece, Captain of a hundred men-at-arms, High Bailiff of Bessin, Governor of Normandy, Lord of twenty-seven domains, Marquis of Saint-Sever. You shall have to wife the daughter of a prince. You will be the head of the House of Herouville. Do not make me die of grief! Come! Come! I will remain here on my knees until I see you. Your old father begs you and humiliates himself before you as if you were God Himself.''

The boy did not altogether understand this language, bristling as it was with expressions and conceits which were strange to him. He remained silent, oppressed by a sense of terror which he could not conquer. Toward evening, the old lord, having made use of all the entreaties and persuasions he could think of, was seized with a sort of religious repentance. He fell upon his knees in the sand and made this vow—

''I swear to erect a chapel to St. John and St. Etienne, the patron saints of my wife and son, to have celebrated there one hundred masses in honor of the Virgin, if God and His saints will give me back the affection of my son, the Duke de Nivron, here present!''

He remained on his knees in deep humility, his hands joined in the attitude of prayer. But, when he saw that his son, the hope of his race, did not come, great tears started from his eyes and rolled down his wasted cheeks. At that moment Etienne, hearing nothing more, slid down to the edge of his cavern like a young adder hungering for the sun; he saw the tears of the heart-broken old man, and, recognizing the language of grief, he seized his father's hand and kissed it, and said with the voice of an angel—

''Mother, forgive!''

In the strength of his joy, the Governor of Normandy took up his son in his arms and, feeling him tremble, tried to set his mind at ease, while he kissed him with as many precautions as he would have taken when handling a flower; he found for him the gentlest words he had ever spoken.

''Merciful God! how you are like my poor Jeanne, dear child!'' he said. ''Tell me how I may please you; I will give you everything you wish. Be strong! **Be brave! I** will teach you to ride on a pony that shall be as kind and gentle as you are kind and gentle. Nothing shall mar your happiness. By the Blood of all the Saints! I will give you power without limit. I will obey you myself as the god of the family."

Father and son entered the state room where the sad life of the Countess had ended. Etienne suddenly leaned against the wall of the room in which he had first seen the light, and where his mother had often signed to him the departure of his persecutor who now, for some reason unknown to him, had become his slave, like one of those gigantic creatures placed at the service of a young prince by the power of a fairy. This fairy's name was Feudalism. When he saw the dreary room whence his eyes had been wont to gaze upon the ocean, tears came into his eyes; the recollections of his long injustice, mingled with the sweet memories of the pleasures he had tasted in the only love of his life, his mother's love, gave him a feeling at once delicious and terrible. The emotions of this child, accustomed to solitary contemplation, had nothing in common with those of ordinary men.

"Will he live?" said the old man, half to himself, surprised at the fraility of his heir.

"I can only live here," replied Etienne simply, who had heard the Duke's words.

"Then this room shall be yours, my child."

"What is to happen?" said young d'Herouville, when he saw a large concourse of people, who seemed to come from all parts of the chateau, gathering in the guard hall, where the Duke had assembled them for the presentation of his son.

"Come," replied his father, taking his hand and leading him into the great hall.

At that period, a duke and peer as mighty as the Duke d'Herouville, with all his power and authority, maintained the household of a prince; younger sons of good families did not disdain to serve under him; the first lieutenant of his artillery company was to him what, in our day, an aide-de-camp is to a marshal. Certain princes allied to the royal house, such as the Guises, the Condés, the Nevers and the Vendomes, had for their pages sons of the best families. The Duke's fortune and ancient lineage (shown by his name, *herus villa*) warranted him in vying in magnificence with men who were really his inferiors, the d'Epernons, the Laynes, the Balagnys, the d'Os and the Zamets, and who at that time were looked upon as upstarts, but who lived like princes nevertheless.

Such a great assemblage of people in his father's house was, therefore, an imposing spectacle to poor Etienne. The Duke seated himself in a chair placed under one of those canopies of carved wood which was on a raised platform, and from which, in some parts of the country, certain lords still passed judgment on matters under their jurisdiction—one of the last traces of Feudalism, which disappeared under the reign of Richelieu. Etienne trembled when he found himself the cynosure of all eyes.

"Do not be afraid," said the Duke, bending his bald head down to his son's ear, "all these are our own people."

Through the semi-darkness—for the sun was just setting, and its rays reddened the window-panes—Etienne saw the bailiff, the captains and lieutenants-at-arms with a following of soldiers, the squires, the chaplain, the secretaries, the physician, the major-domo, the ushers, the steward, the gamekeepers, the serving-men and the grooms. Though they all maintained a respectful attitude, due to their fear of the old man, a feeling which was shared even by the most influential people in the province, a low murmur of curiosity went round. This murmur chilled Etienne's blood, who, for the first time, breathed the close atmosphere of a crowded room; his senses were accustomed to the pure, fresh air of the sea. He was seized with a horrible palpitation of the heart when his father, in a majestic, solemn tone, began to speak.

"My friends," he said, "here is my son Etienne, my first-born and heir presumptive, Duke de Nivron, upon whom the King will undoubtedly confer the titles borne by his deceased brother; I present him to you in order that you may recognize and obey him as myself. I warn you that if any one of you, or any one in the province under my rule, offend or displease the young Duke in any manner whatsoever, and it come to my knowledge, it were better for that man that he had never been born. You have heard me. Return to your duties and God go with you. The funeral services of Maximilien d'Herouville will take place here as soon as the body arrives. The house will go into mourning for a week, after which we will do honor to my son and heir Etienne."

"Long live the Duke! Long life to the d'Herouvilles!"

The shout that went up shook the rafters.

The serving-men brought torches to light up the hall. The noise and light, together with the emotions caused Etienne by his father's discourse, were too much for him. Though his soft, girlish hand was clasped in his father's large palm, he fell back in the armchair. When the Duke, who had signalled to his lieutenant to approach, said to him—

"Well, Baron d'Artagnon, I am happy to be able to make good my loss; come and see my son!" he grasped a hand which was so icy cold that he looked again at the Duke de Nivron, believing him dead, and, seeing him prostrate in the chair, he cried out in alarm.

Beauvouloir came up, took the young man in his arms and carried him away, saying to his master—

"You have killed him by not preparing him for this ceremony."

"An heir can never be born to him if that is the case," cried the Duke, who followed Beauvouloir into the state bedchamber, where the leech laid the young Duke on the bed.

"Well, bone-setter?" asked the father with anxiety.

"It is nothing," replied the old retainer, pointing to Etienne, who had already revived under the influence of a cordial, several drops of which had been given him on a piece of sugar, a new and precious substance which was sold at that time for its weight in gold.

"Here, take this, old rogue," said the Duke, holding out his purse to Beauvouloir, "and care for him as if he were a King's son. If he dies by your neglect I will roast you alive."

"If you continue to be so violent you will kill your son yourself," roughly said the physician to his master; "leave him, he is going to sleep."

"Good-night, my darling," said the old man, kissing his son on the forehead.

"Good-night, father," replied the young man, and the old Duke trembled with delight as he heard Etienne call him father for the first time.

The Duke took Beauvouloir by the arm, led him into the next room and playfully pushed him into one of the window embrasures as he said to him—

"Aha, old rogue, it is your turn now!"

This expression, which was a favorite one of the Duke's, made the physician smile, as he had long since given up the practice of his calling.

"You know," continued the Duke, "that I wish you no harm. You twice attended my poor Jeanne; you cured my son Maximilien. In fact, you have become one of the family.—Poor child! I will avenge you, I will take care of the man who killed you!—The whole future of the House of Herouville is, therefore, in your hands. You alone know whether this poor boy has the stuff in him to make young Herouvilles. You understand me. What do you think?"

"His life on the sea-shore has been so pure and healthy that nature has been kinder to him than she would have been had he been brought up here. But so frail a body is always subservient to the soul. The young Duke must choose a wife for himself, for all in him will be the work of nature and not the result of your wishes. He will love artlessly and his heart will tell him what you wish him to do for your name. Give your son to a shrew and he will run away and hide among the rocks. But further: if a shock caused by terror may kill him, I believe it to be equally true that too sudden happiness will have the same effect. To prevent such a misfortune my advice is to let Etienne go his own way and choose for himself some lady whom he can love. Mark my words, sir. Although you are a great and powerful prince, you understand nothing of these things. Give me your entire confidence and you will have a grandson."

"Give me a grandson by any quackery you please and I will ennoble you. Yes, out of the rascal leech I will make a nobleman. Beauvouloir, you shall be Baron de Forcalier. Use whatever magic you will, white or black, masses at the Church or the Witches' Sabbath; so that you give me a male heir all will be well."

"I know," said Beauvouloir, "a Witches' Sabbath which may spoil everything. It is yourself, my lord. I know you. You want an heir at any price to-day; to-morrow you will want to fix the conditions; you will torment your son."

"God forbid!"

"Well, go to Court, where the death of the Marshal and the emancipation of the King must have turned everything topsy-turvy, and where you will have enough to do, were it only to receive the marshal's baton which was promised you. Let me look after my young master Etienne. But give me your word of honor that you approve of everything that I may do."

The Duke signified his assent by a grasp of the hand, and retired to his apartment.

When the life of a rich and powerful lord is nearing its close his physician is an important personage. Therefore it is not surprising that Beauvouloir was so familiar with the Duke d'Herouville. Apart from the illegitimate ties which bound him to the Duke and which militated in his favor, the Duke well knew the good sense of his "bone-setter," and, indeed, had made him one of his favored counsellors. Beauvouloir was the Coyctier of this Louis XI. But, though his skill was so great, the leech's influence over the Duke was not as strong as his desire for an heir. The retainer saw that the prejudices of the noble would prevail against the vows of the father. Skilful physician as he was, Beauvouloir understood that in a creature so delicately organized as Etienne marriage must be a sweet and gentle inspiration, which would give him new strength as it increased the ardor of his love. As he had said, to force a wife on Etienne would be to kill him. Great care must be taken that the young hermit should not take fright at marriage, of which he knew nothing, and that he should be kept in ignorance of his father's motive. This poetical soul could only comprehend a love as noble and pure as that of Petrarch for Laura or Dante for Beatrix. Like his mother, he was all soul and purity; he might be given an opportunity to love, but he could never be forced into it. Such compulsion would dry up the fountains of his life.

Beauvouloir was a father; his daughter had been brought up under conditions which would eminently suit her to be the wife of Etienne. It was so difficult to foresee the events which had made the child destined to the Church the heir-presumptive of the House of Herouville that Beauvouloir had never noticed the resemblance between the destinies of Etienne and Gabrielle. It was a thought which was inspired by his devotion to the two young creatures rather than by ambition. In spite of medical skill, his wife had died in giving birth to a daughter whose health was so feeble that he at first thought the mother had bequeathed to her child only the germs of death. Beauvouloir loved his Gabrielle as all old men love their only child. His science and constant care had given a sort of artificial life to the frail creature, whom he cultivated as a florist cultivates some strange plant. He had brought her up on his Forcalier estate, where she was protected against the many dangers of those times by the general goodwill with which Beauvouloir was regarded, and the superstitious fear inspired by his scientific knowledge. When he was taken into the Herouville household he enjoyed still greater immunity, and his influential position with the Governor had foiled the plots of his enemies. But he took good care to leave his daughter at Forcalier whenever he came to the chateau.

When he promised an heir to the old Duke and asked his word of honor to approve his conduct, he had suddenly thought of Gabrielle, the sweet child whose mother had been forgotten by the Duke as he had forgotten his son Etienne. He awaited the departure of his master to carry out his plans, fearing that they might be discovered by him, with disastrous results.

Beauvouloir's house had a southerly exposure, on the slope of one of those gentle hills which encircle the Normandy vales; a thick wood sheltered it on the north, and high walls, hedges and deep ditches completely inclosed it. The garden sloped down to the river which ran through the valley, and at the end of the garden a gap in the hedge formed a natural landing-place. Through the shrubbery a narrow lane followed the windings of the river, and willows, beeches and oaks screened it like a forest path. Between the house and river stretched a grassy slope, shaded by rare trees, whose varied tints formed a richly colored mass of foliage. Here, the silvery bark of a pine could be distinguished against the deep green of elm trees; there, a poplar lifted its slender trunk; further back, weeping willows drooped among great walnut trees. Through this little wood one might go down to the river at any time, sheltered from the sun's rays. The front of the house, along which ran the yellow band of a gravelled terrace, was shaded by a wooden balcony, covered with creeping plants, which, in the month of May, blossomed into flowers as far up as the second story windows. Though not large, the garden was set off to the best advantage by the manner in which it was laid out; vantage points were skilfully arranged whence the eye might roam over the valley at will.

So, according to her fancy, Gabrielle could either retire into the seclusion of some nook where she could see nothing but the green grass and blue sky between the tree-tops, or, gazing into the distance from the summit of a knoll she could follow the undulations of the green hills until they gradually faded into the blue ocean of air or were lost in the mountain clouds which hovered over them.

Watched over by her grandmother, and waited upon by her nurse, Gabrielle Beauvouloir never left her modest home except to go to the village church, the belfry of which could be seen on the hill, and whither she was always accompanied by her grandmother, her nurse, and her father's serving-man. So she had reached the age of seventeen years in entire ignorance of the world, which was not uncommon at a time when books were seldom seen and educated women were a rarity. Her home had been like a convent to her—with more liberty perhaps and less devotional exercise—in which she had grown up under the eyes of her grandmother and the protection of her father, the only man she had ever known.

This seclusion, rendered necessary from her birth by the weakness of her constitution, had been carefully maintained by Beauvouloir. As Gabrielle grew older the attentions showered upon her and the influence of the pure air had undoubtedly fortified her frail health. Nevertheless, the learned physician could not be deceived when he saw the lines about his daughter's eyes which would change, darken or redden with her emotions; the weakness of her body and the activity of her soul were shown by signs which much experience enabled him to recognize. Then Gabrielle's glorious beauty was a source of danger to her in that age of rapine and violence. A thousand reasons had counselled the good father to strengthen the barrier between the world and his daughter, whose excessive sensibility frightened him. A passion, an abduction or a severe shock of any kind would have caused her death. Though his daughter seldom required reproof, a word of reprimand would so upset her that she would brood over it for days, weeping silently. Gabrielle's mental education needed no less care than her health. The old physician was obliged to give up telling her fairy stories, as they made too much of an impression upon her. So this man, whom long experience had taught so much, had taken care to develop his daughter's body so as to lessen the effect of the shocks which so sensitive a nature was sure to suffer. As Gabrielle was the hope of his life and his only heir, he had never hesitated about procuring for her everything which he considered would make for her happiness; but he carefully kept her from all books, pictures, music or any form of art which might agitate her mind. Helped by his mother, he interested Gabrielle in manual work. She was instructed in tapestry-work, sewing, lace-making, the culture of flowers, housekeeping, fruit-harvesting and similar occupations. Beauvouloir bought her fine spinning-wheels, handsomely carved chests, rich carpets, Bernard Palissy pottery, tables, hassocks and elegantly carved chairs, upholstered with fine stuffs, and embroidered linen and jewels. With a father's instinct the old man always selected his gifts from among such ornaments as were in the fantastic style known as Arabesque, and which, appealing neither to the sense nor to the mind, interest only by their novelty.

Thus, strange as it was, the life which his father's hate had forced upon Etienne was enjoined upon Gabrielle by paternal love. In one or the other of the two children the soul would ultimately destroy the body; and without complete solitude, ordained by fate in the one case and dictated by science in the other, both of them might have succumbed, one to terror, the other under the stress of too much passion. But, alas! instead of living in a dry and arid country, which is the background given by most great painters to their Virgins, Gabrielle was surrounded by rich and luxuriant verdure. Beauvouloir could not mar the harmonious grouping of the copses, the gorgeous blending of color in the banks of flowers, the velvety freshness of the meadow, the love expressed in the interlacing creepers. But the language of Nature was heard rather than understood by Gabrielle, who, in some grassy spot, would often fall into dreamy musings. In the confusion of the shadowy thoughts suggested by the blue sky and a landscape whose every beauty she knew, and the fresh air of the sea which divides the English fogs from the clear sunlight of France, a distant light glimmered through her mind, a star which pierced the darkness in which her father had kept her.

Beauvouloir had not discouraged thoughts of religion in his daughter; she united to her admiration of nature a deep reverence of the Creator; she loved God, she loved Jesus, the Virgin and the Saints; she was a Catholic in the manner of St. Theresa, who saw in the Saviour a faithful spouse and an everlasting marriage. But Gabrielle gave herself up to this passion, which is so strong in many souls, with a simplicity so touching that she would have disarmed the most brutal by the infantine candor of her faith.

Whither would this life of innocence conduct her? How could a mind be enlightened which was as pure as the water of a placid lake in which only the sky was reflected? What pictures could be painted upon this canvas still untouched? To what tree would this ivy cling? The father never thought of these things without anxious forebodings.

Just at that time the old scholar was jogging along the road which led from the Chateau d'Herouville to Ourscamp, the name of the village near which his Forcalier estate was situated. The great love he bore his child was responsible for the daring project he contemplated. Only one man in the world could make her happy, and that man was Etienne. Surely the angelic son of Jeanne de Saint-Savin and the gentle daughter of Gertrude Marana were made for one another. Any other woman but Gabrielle would terrify and perhaps kill the heir-presumptive of the House of Herouville, just as it seemed to Beauvouloir that Gabrielle would perish if she were united to any man who had not the virginal purity of Etienne. Certainly the poor physician had never dreamed that fate would ever bring about such a union. It was no light matter, during the reign of Louis XIII., to dare to propose marriage between the only son of the Duke d'Herouville and the daughter of a poor bone-setter. However, from this marriage alone could there be any possibility of the offspring so fiercely desired by the old Duke. Nature had intended these two creatures for one another; God had brought them together by a wonderful combination of circumstances, while the world and social laws placed between them an almost insurmountable barrier. Though the old man believed he could discern the hand of God in these things, and although he had secured the Duke's word of honor, he was seized with such apprehensions when he thought of the old Duke's violent nature that he retraced his steps as soon as he caught sight of the curling smoke of his home rising up between the trees. But his connection with the Duke, which might have some influence upon the old noble, decided him, and once he had made up his mind Beauvouloir trusted blindly in fate. After all, the Duke might die before the marriage, and besides were there not similar cases? A Dauphiny peasant, Francoise Mignot, had wedded the Marshal de l'Hopital; the son of the noble Anne de Montmorency had married Diane, daughter of Henri II. and a Piedmontese woman named Philippe Duc.

During this deliberation, in which his paternal affection was considering every probability, trying to forecast the outcome by weighing the chances, Gabrielle was walking in the garden, selecting flowers for the vases of the famous potter who made out of enamel what Benvenuto Cellini accomplished with metal. Gabrielle had placed one of these vases, ornamented with figures in relief, on a table in the middle of the room and was filling it with flowers to amuse her grandmother, and perhaps also to give a form to her thoughts. The great vase, said to have been manufactured at Limoges, had been filled and placed on the rich tablecloth, and Gabrielle was saying to her grandmother, "Look, is it not beautiful?" when Beauvouloir entered. The girl ran to her father and threw herself into his arms. After the first burst of tenderness Gabrielle asked her father to admire the bouquet; but Beauvouloir, after having looked at it, turned an earnest gaze on his daughter, who reddened under its intensity.

"It is time," he said to himself as he saw the meaning in the flowers, the arrangement of which both as to form and color had undoubtedly been studied, as the effect of the bouquet on the eye was unusually striking.

Gabrielle remained standing and thought no more of her handiwork. As Beauvouloir looked at his daughter tears gathered in his eyes, rolled down his cheeks and dropped on his shirt, which could be seen through his open doublet. He cast aside his hat, from which an old red feather drooped, and clasped his forehead in his hands. Then he dried his eyes and looked up again at his daughter, who made a charming picture against the dark panelling of the room, the ebony furniture and the heavy silk hangings. A father who loves his child would wish to keep her always a child.

"What ails you, my son?" asked the old mother, taking off her spectacles, surprised at the preoccupation of the good man, who was usually so lively. The physician pointed at his daughter, and the old woman nodded her head as if to say: "Yes, is she not charming?"

Who has not known the emotion felt by Beauvouloir as he looked upon the young girl, clad in the becoming costume of the time, on a glorious Normandy day! Gabrielle wore the style of corset which is pointed at the front and square behind, and in which Italian painters love to represent their Virgins and Madonnas. A close-fitting bodice of sky-blue velvet set off to good advantage her slender figure; it molded the shoulders, the back and the waist with a neatness of design which could not have been improved by the most skilful of tailors, and was embroidered in light-colored silk about the neck. A skirt of brown-colored stuff, which continued the lines begun by the velvet bodice, fell about her feet in narrow folds. Her figure was so slender that Gabrielle looked taller than she really was. She seemed standing there to be the living embodiment of one of the graceful statuettes which were then in vogue and which commanded admiration by the softness of their lines and the vigor of their conception. Gabrielle's features were delicate without being insignificant. The transparency of her skin almost made you fancy that you could see the blood flowing through the blue veins. The extreme pallor of her face was relieved by a dash of red in the cheeks. Concealed under a little cap of velvet embroidered with pearls, her fair hair hung over her temples in two golden locks and played in curls about her shoulders. The warm color of her hair showed off the brilliant whiteness of the neck and added to the beauty of the pure lines of her face. Her eyes, large and shaded by heavy eyelashes, were in harmony with the grace of her head and figure; a sort of pearl-gray, they were bright without being brilliant; innocence was there but not passion. The straight nose would have been cold as a steel blade but for the two soft, rosy nostrils, which seemed to be in harmony with the purity of a serene forehead. Lastly, an alert little ear attracted the eye by showing under the bonnet, between two tufts of hair, the bright ruby of an earring, which stood out in strong contrast to her milky-white throat. This was not the Norman beauty, rosy and stout, nor the Southern beauty, in which passion and vivacity are intermingled, nor the French type, fleeting as it is expressive, nor the beauty of the North, sad and cold; it was the seraphic and lasting beauty of the Catholic Church, at once soft and firm, severe and tender.

"Where could one find a prettier Duchess?" Beauvouloir asked himself as he looked at Gabrielle, who, gracefully leaning against the table as she followed with her eyes the flight of a bird, might have been compared to a fawn pausing to listen to the murmur of the stream at which it is about to drink.

"Come and sit here," said Beauvouloir, slapping his thigh and giving the girl a look which meant a confidence. Gabrielle understood and seated herself on her father's knee with the light grace of a gazelle and put her arms round his neck, crushing his ruffle.

"Of whom were you thinking when you gathered those flowers? I never saw a prettier bouquet."

"Of many things," she replied, with a winsome smile. "As I was admiring those flowers, which seem made for us, I asked myself for whom we, ourselves, are made; who the beings are that look at *us?* You are my father, and I can tell you all that I feel; you are clever and you will explain everything to me. When the sky is clouded I am calm and almost happy. When it is clear and the scent of flowers is in the air, and all nature seems to be rejoicing, and I am down there on my seat among the honeysuckle and jasmine, there rise in me waves of feeling which break against my peace of mind. Thoughts come up in my heart which fly away like the birds that flit past the windows; I cannot hold them back. And sometimes when I have made a bouquet, the colors of which are blended like tapestry, red against white and green against brown, when all is gay and the flowers are blowing in the sunlit air, I seem to be almost happy in the contemplation of my own thoughts. When, at Church, the organ plays and the priests intone the responses, so that there are two distinct harmonies, the voices and the organ, then I am so happy that the music seems to overflow my heart, and I pray with a fervor which I have never known before. . . ."

While listening to his daughter's words, Beauvouloir examined her with a critical eye; so deep was his thought that his look seemed almost stupid, just as a waterfall sometimes has the appearance of a motionless body. He raised the veil which concealed the secret struggle of the soul against the body, he studied the symptoms which he had treated in all his long experience, and compared them with the symptoms shown in this frail creature, who almost frightened him by her delicacy. He tried to turn the searchlight of science on the future of this angelic child, and he felt giddy, as one who stands on the brink of a precipice. Gabrielle's too ringing voice and too slight frame gave him great uneasiness, and as he questioned her he questioned himself.

"You suffer here?" he cried at last.

She slowly nodded her head.

"By the grace of God," said the old man, heaving a sigh, "I shall take you to the Chateau d'Herouville, where you may gain some benefit by bathing in the sea."

"Really, father? You are not joking with your Gabrielle? I have so longed to see the chateau and the Duke's captains and men-at-arms!"

"Yes, my daughter. Your nurse and Jean will accompany you."

"Will it be soon?"

"To-morrow," replied the old man, hastening into the garden to conceal his emotion from his mother and daughter.

"God is my witness," cried he, "that no ambitious thought is prompting me. To save my daughter and make poor little Etienne happy are my only motives."

If he questioned himself in this manner it was because he felt in his inmost heart a certain satisfaction in the knowledge that the success of his plan would eventually make Gabrielle Duchesse d'Herouville. After all, a father is only a man.

He walked about for some time and returned for supper, after which he gave himself up to the enjoyment of contemplating his daughter and fancifully mapping out for her a brilliant career.

When, before retiring, the grandmother, the nurse, the physician and Gabrielle went down on their knees for the evening prayer, he said to them—

"Let us all ask God's blessing on our undertaking."

The grandmother, who knew her son's plans, could not hide her tears. Gabrielle was radiant with happiness. Her father trembled, so much did he fear some catastrophe.

"After all," said his mother, "do not be afraid, Antoine. The Duke will not kill his granddaughter."

"No," replied he, "but he might force her to wed some ruffian of a baron who would murder us all."

The next day, Gabrielle, riding a donkey, followed by her nurse on foot and her father on his mule, and accompanied by the serving-man leading two pack-horses, set out for the Chateau d'Herouville, which they did not reach until nightfall. In order to keep this journey a secret, Beauvouloir started early in the morning and took provisions with him, so that it would not be necessary to stop at inns on the road. By such means he arrived after sundown, without attracting the notice of any one at the chateau, or at the cottage in which the disowned child had lived so long. Here they found Bertrand, the only person he had taken into his confidence. The old squire helped them to unload the horses and establish the leech's daughter in the cottage. When Bertrand saw Gabrielle he was astounded.

"I would have sworn it was her mother!" he cried. "She is just so slender and graceful; she has the same fair complexion and blond hair. The old Duke will surely love her."

"God grant it!" said Beauvouloir. "But will he allow the intermingling of my blood and his?"

"He can scarcely deny it," replied Bertrand. "I have often waited for him at the house of the Belle Romaine, who lived in the Rue Culture-Sainte-Cathérine. The Cardinal de Lorraine was forced to leave her to my master from very shame at having been so rudely handled as he left her house. My master, who at that time was about twenty years old, will probably remember the escapade well; even then he was a daring fellow. I may say now that he was the leading spirit in the assault!"

"He no longer thinks of such matters," said Beauvouloir. "He knows that my wife is dead, but I doubt if he knows I have a daughter!"

"Two old sailors such as we should be able to bring the ship to port," said Bertrand. "After all, if the Duke flies into a rage and takes it out of our carcasses, they will have done their work."

Before leaving, the Duke d'Herouville had strictly forbidden any one trespassing on the strip of shore where

Etienne had passed so much of his life, unless, indeed, the Duke de Nivron cared to take any one there with him. This command, suggested by Beauvouloir, who had pointed out the necessity of allowing Etienne to keep his old habits, insured privacy to Gabrielle and her nurse, who were cautioned by the physician never to go beyond the limits without his permission.

Etienne remained for two days in the state room, buried in sweet memories. In this room, which had been his mother's, and from whose window she had so often smiled and waved her kerchief to the disowned child, now master of the chateau, the young Duke would sit for hours, motionless, dreaming of the past.

The day following his return Beauvouloir went to see his young master, and gently chided him for remaining so long indoors without going out into the fresh air, explaining to him that since he had come to the chateau he must not lead the life of a prisoner.

"But this is no ordinary room," replied Etienne; "it contains the soul of my mother."

However, by the influence he had over the boy the physician succeeded in persuading Etienne to go out for a walk every day, either on the sea-shore or inland, which was new to him. But Etienne, still under the sway of his memories, remained all the next day at his window, looking out at the sea, which in all its varied hues he had never seen so beautiful. He broke the monotony of this by reading Petrarch, one of his favorite authors, whose poetry appealed to him for the pure and constant love it expressed. Etienne was not a man who could love more than once, and his whole soul would go into that love. Though it would be strong, as all such affections are, it would be calm and as pure as the Italian poet's sonnets. At sunset this child of solitude began to sing with his wonderful voice, which had fallen like a hope even on his father's unmusical ear. He expressed the sadness of his heart by repeated variations of a single melody, in the way that a nightingale sings. This air, attributed to the late King Henri IV., was not the air of "Gabrielle," but one much superior in composition, melody and feeling. The air was undoubtedly taken from the old folk songs which had lulled him to sleep in the mountains of Béarn.

After having artlessly lightened his heart by singing, Etienne looked out on the sea as he murmured—

"You are my betrothed and only love!"

Then he sung these words of the song—

> "She is fair,
> Beyond compare!"

and repeated them with the passion of a timid young man who is only daring when alone. It was a dreamy, fascinating song, and he took up the refrain again and again, until finally the last notes died away like the vibrations of a bell. At that moment a voice which seemed to come from some siren of the sea—a woman's voice—repeated the air which he had just ceased singing, but with all the little hesitations of one to whom music is revealed for the first time; he recognized the faltering of a voice new to the poetry of harmony. Etienne, whom long study of his own voice had taught the language of sound, a language in which the soul finds as much expression as in speech, could only guess at the identity of the unknown singer. In the stillness of the air he could hear every sound, and he started as he caught the rustling of a gown; he, to whom a shock was almost fatal, was amazed to feel the same soothing sensation which the coming of his mother used to give him.

"Come, Gabrielle, my child," he heard Beauvouloir say, "you know I have forbidden you to stay on the shore after sundown. Come in, my child."

"Gabrielle," said Etienne to himself, "what a charming name!"

Beauvouloir presently appeared, and roused his young master from musings as deep as dreams. It was night and the moon was rising.

"My lord," said the physician, "you have not been out again to-day; it is not wise of you."

"Then *I*," replied Etienne, "may go out on the shore after sundown?"

The double meaning of this remark, which betrayed the sweet malice of a first desire, made the old man smile.

"So you have a daughter, Beauvouloir?"

"Yes, my lord, the child of my old age, my darling little one. The Duke, your illustrious father, cautioned me to watch over your lordship carefully, and no longer being able to go to Forcalier, where she was, I have been unfortunately obliged to take her away, and in order to insure her seclusion I have installed her in the little house in which your lordship used to live. She is so delicate that a strong emotion would upset her. For that reason I have not taught her anything."

"Then she knows nothing!" said Etienne, surprised.

"She has all the qualities of a good housekeeper, but she has grown up like a plant. Ignorance, my lord, is a thing as sacred as knowledge; knowledge and ignorance are two distinct modes of living; knowledge has kept your lordship alive, ignorance will save my daughter. The finest pearls escape the eye of the diver and rest content at the bottom of the sea. I might compare Gabrielle to a pearl; her complexion has its coloring, her soul its gentleness, and until now my Forcalier estate has been her shell."

"Come with me," said Etienne, throwing a cloak over his shoulders, "the evening is fine and I would walk on the sea-shore."

Beauvouloir and his young master walked in silence until they caught sight of the light which shone out between the shutters of the fisher's hut like a stream of gold across the sea.

"I cannot explain," said Etienne, "the emotions given me by the sight of that ray of light on the sea. I have so often watched the light die out of the window over there," he added, pointing to the window of his mother's room in the chateau.

"Though Gabrielle is delicate," replied Beauvouloir gayly, "as the evening is so mild and there is so little dampness in the air, I think she might perhaps come out and walk with us; I shall go and fetch her; but be prudent, my lord."

Etienne was too timid to propose accompanying Beauvouloir to the hut; besides, he was seized with that feeling of torpor to which we are reduced by the confusion of thoughts and sensations which mark the beginning of an affair of the heart.

When he found himself alone he could not help crying out, inspired by the moonlit sea: "The ocean has passed into my soul!"

The sight of the lovely creature approaching, silvered by the moon, increased the palpitation of his heart, but without causing him pain.

"Gabrielle, my child," said Beauvouloir, "let me present you to his lordship."

At that moment poor Etienne wished he had the colossal stature of his father, he would have liked to be strong instead of weakly. All the vanities of a man in love pricked his heart like arrows and he remained silent, conscious for the first time of his many imperfections. Embarrassed at first by the young girl's courtesy, he saluted her awkwardly and stayed by the side of Beauvouloir, with whom he conversed while walking; but Gabrielle's timid and modest countenance encouraged him and he ventured to address a question to her. The song incident had been purely chance; the physician had arranged nothing, but correctly assumed that in two such simple hearts love would come of itself. A happy subject of conversation was soon found in Gabrielle's repetition of the air.

During this walk Etienne felt the lightness of spirit which all men feel when they give their hearts away for the first time. He offered to give Gabrielle lessons in singing. The poor child was so happy to be able to show that he possessed one point of superiority over the young girl that he trembled with joy when she accepted. Just then the light from the cottage shone full on Gabrielle, and Etienne was able to discern the vague points of resemblance she had to his dead mother. Like Jeanne de Saint-Savin, Beauvouloir's daughter was slender and delicate; on her features, as on those of the Duchess, suffering and melancholy had stamped a mysterious grace. She had the nobility peculiar to people unchanged by the manners of society and in whom everything is beautiful because it is natural. Etienne caught the young girl looking at him as a bird peeps over its nest. Sheltered by her father, Gabrielle wished to study Etienne at her ease, and her look expressed as much curiosity as pleasure and as much goodwill as artless audacity. In her eyes Etienne was delicate rather than feeble; she found him so much like herself that there was nothing to frighten her in the thought that he was her master.

Etienne's pallor, his beautiful hands, his melancholy smile, his hair, which hung gracefully over his shoulders, his noble brow marked with youthful suffering—these contrasts of luxury and poverty, power and weakness, pleased her; perhaps they flattered the instinct of motherly protection which is always present in a woman's love? Perhaps they appealed to the feeling which every woman has that the one she loves is above ordinary men? Both were overcome by new and strange thoughts; they were silent and amazed, for the strongest feelings are the least demonstrative. All enduring love begins in dreamy meditation. It was well, perhaps, for these two creatures that they should see each other for the first time in the moonlight, that they might not be too suddenly dazzled by love's splendors; it was well that they should meet on the shore of the sea, an image of the immensity of their feelings. They separated with hearts overflowing, yet each fearing that the other had not been pleased.

From his window Etienne gazed long at the fisher's hut. During that hour of mingled hope and fear the young poet found a new meaning in the sonnets of Petrarch. He had seen his Laura, a lovely and exquisite creature, pure and bright as a sunbeam, wise as an angel but weak as a woman. His twenty years of study were seen in a new light; he understood the mysterious chain which links together all beauty; he discovered how much there was of woman in all the poetry he had admired; he had lived so long in blindness that all his past seemed blended in the emotions of that glorious night. Gabrielle's resemblance to his mother seemed something given to him from God. He did not bring his sorrow into his passion; it was to him a sort of continuation of his mother's love. At night he would gaze at the hut in which his Gabrielle was sleeping with the same emotions that his mother must have felt when he was sleeping there. This was another bond between the present and the past. In the mists of his memory the sad face of Jeanne de Saint-Savin appeared to him; he fancied he could see her sweet smile and hear her soft voice as she bowed her head and wept. The light in the window went out. Etienne sang the lovely ballad of Henri IV. with new feeling, and from afar Gabrielle's voice repeated the air. The young girl was making her first journey through the enchanted land of love. This answer to his song filled Etienne's heart with joy. He felt new blood in his veins and a strength he had never known before. The feeble alone know the ecstasy of this second birth. The poor, the suffering and the persecuted are capable of exquisite pleasures; the universe is nothing to them. Etienne was united by a thousand bonds of sympathy to the people of the City Sorrowful. His new grandeur frightened him, but in love he found the elixir of life; he loved love for itself.

The next day Etienne rose early and hastened to his old haunt, where Gabrielle, hurried by an impatience which she would not have cared to confess, had already donned her charming costume and curled her fair hair. Both had a great desire to see each other again, though both half feared the result of the meeting. As to him, you may imagine that nothing but his finest lace and jauntiest doublet and hose would satisfy him that day. He wore that handsome costume which is seen in the portraits of Louis XIII. —a pale countenance, oppressed by grandeur and pomp as Etienne's was. But his dress was not the only point of resemblance that existed between monarch and subject. Etienne was as exquisitely sensitive as Louis XIII., and his sense of honor was equally high.

Though her knowledge of the world was small, Gabrielle knew that the daughter of a humble bone-setter was scarcely a match for the Duke de Nivron, heir of the House of Herouville; but she was hardly yet conscious of her love. The artless creature did not build castles in the air in which ambition had any place. Hardly knowing what love meant, she regarded Etienne's high position only as an obstacle to her longing, just as a child covets the bunch of grapes beyond his reach. To the young girl who could be affected at the sight of a flower, and who wept for joy at the chanting of the liturgy, the feelings awakened by the frailty of the lord of the chateau were strong and sweet. But Etienne might change in some way during the night; her hopes were so high that she was almost afraid to see him again.

"Will you let me come and see you sometimes?" asked the Duke, dropping his eyes.

When she saw how timid and humble Etienne was, for he also had deified his love, Gabrielle was embarrassed by the power thrust upon her, yet deeply moved and flattered by his submission. Only a woman knows what power of seduction there is in a man's respect for her. Nevertheless, she feared lest she might be mistaken, and, inquisitive as the first woman, she tried to find out.

"Did you not promise me yesterday to teach me music?"

she said to him, hoping that the music might serve as a pretext for his coming.

If the poor child had known anything of Etienne's life she would have been careful to avoid the shadow of a doubt. To him his word was sacred, and Gabrielle's words gave him the deepest pain. He had come with his heart full of hope and he found she doubted his word. His joy vanished and gave place to his old-time sadness. Enlightened by her womanly instinct for sorrow, which is surely the charity of heaven, Gabrielle divined the pain of which she had been the cause. She was so mortified that she would have given anything to open her heart to Etienne—for had she not herself suffered cruel pangs from the mere reproof of a stern look?—and in her confusion she artlessly betrayed the state of her mind. Gabrielle's tears changed Etienne's pain into pleasure, and he then accused himself of tyranny. It was fortunate that they had tuned their hearts together, so to speak, so soon; for this would safeguard them from a thousand tortures. All at once Etienne, impatient to take refuge in some occupation, led Gabrielle to a table in front of the little window before which he had suffered so much, and where, in days gone by, he had gone to admire some flower more beautiful than its fellows. Then he opened a book, and the hair of the two children mingled as they bent over it.

These two creatures, so strong in heart and so frail in body, but beautified by the graces of suffering, formed a touching picture. Gabrielle knew nothing of coquetry; a look was granted as soon as asked for, and modesty alone prevented their continuously gazing into each other's eyes. It gave her pleasure to tell Etienne how much she enjoyed listening to his voice; she would forget the meaning of the words while he was explaining to her the position of the notes and their respective values; she listened, deserting the melody for the instrument, and the idea for the expression—one of love's subtlest flatteries. Gabrielle thought Etienne handsome; she liked to feel the velvet of his cloak and touch the lace of his collar. As for Etienne, he was transformed under her beautiful eyes; they infused him with a vitality which sparkled in his eyes, shone on his brow and revived his spirits. He did not suffer from this new employment of his faculties; on the contrary, he became strong. Happiness was the nourishment of his new life.

As there was nothing to keep them apart, they remained together not only that day but every other; for they belonged to each other from the first, passing the sceptre of authority from hand to hand, and playing with each other as a child plays with life. Sitting together on the golden sands, they told each other of their past—his, unhappy but full of dreams; hers, a dream but full of sad joys.

"I never had a mother," said Gabrielle, "but my father has been as good as God."

"I never had a father," replied the disowned child, "but my mother was Heaven to me."

Etienne told her of his youth, his love for his mother and his taste for flowers. Gabrielle cried out at this. When he questioned her she blushed and would not answer. Then, when she saw a shadow cloud Etienne's brow, which mirrored every emotion and over which death seemed to be ever hovering, she replied: "I used to love flowers, too." She was pleased to have some connection with his past, even by a taste in common. Love always tries to appear old; it is a child's vanity.

Etienne brought her flowers next day, ordering the rarest, as his mother had done for him. To what heights could not the passion of this lonely creature rise—a passion which was founded on the traditions of motherhood, and which lavished on his loved one the tender cares that his mother had heaped on him! What a glory there was for him in the ties which bound those two affections! Flowers and music became the language of their love. Gabrielle acknowledged Etienne's gifts with bouquets, a single one of which had taught the old bone-setter that his daughter already knew too much. The ignorance of worldly things of the two lovers made a dark background against which the smallest incidents of their spiritual intimacy stood out with the exquisite distinctness of a profile carved in bronze. Their lives had been hitherto so silent that every word spoken brought up a flood of ideas. They were at once poets and poetry. Music, the most sensuous of the arts to amorous souls, was the instrument of their thoughts, and their passion often found freedom in wild bursts of song.

It is said that love thrives on opposition, on quarrels and reconcilements—vulgar contests between mind and matter. But the first flight of true love carries him far beyond such trifles; he sees only two beings united by a single desire. Gabrielle, because she was a woman, Etienne, because he had suffered and brooded so long, were soon beyond the realm of vulgar passions—and they went still further. Like all delicate natures, they had faith, that celestial gift which increases the strength as it uplifts the soul. For them it was always high noon. They felt that divine belief in themselves which suffers neither jealousy nor anxiety. To constant admiration was added an ever-willing self-sacrifice. Under these conditions love was unalloyed by suffering.

Their very weakness united them. If the young noble was superior in knowledge and position, the leech's daughter surpassed him in depth of feeling, beauty and grace of movement. Thus, of a sudden these two white doves found themselves flying on a single wing across the blue vault of heaven. Etienne loved and was loved, the present was calm and the future was unclouded; he was master, the chateau belonged to him: the ocean was theirs. No uneasiness troubled their harmonious song; their purity of sense and mind glorified the world, and their thoughts flowed on without effort. Like two zephyrs perched on the same branch of a willow, they enjoyed looking at themselves mirrored in the clear water below. The immensity of the ocean satisfied them, and they admired it without ever dreaming of sailing over it in some white-sailed ship, bound for the land of Hope.

There is a period in love when it is sufficient in itself, when it is happy in its very being. During that springtime, when everything is blossoming, the lover sometimes hides from the woman he loves that he may delight the more at seeing her again. But Etienne and Gabrielle plunged unheeding into the joys of that childlike existence. Sometimes they resembled two sisters by the grace of their confidences, and sometimes two brothers by the enthusiasm of their researches. Love generally consists of a god and a slave, but they incarnated Plato's delicious dream. There was but one divinity, and they worshipped in turn.

Then came caresses, slowly, one by one, but pure and light-hearted as the frolics of two children. The sentiment which led them to pour out their souls in an impassioned hymn was sure to have its outcome in love. On their lips and in their hearts they felt the constant washing of the sea on the sandy beach—so much alike, yet so different; joyous, eternal fidelity.

Reckoned by days, this had lasted five months; reckoned by emotions, dreams, realized hopes and the thousand joys of two laughing children, it had been a lifetime. Some lives are always gloomy, lived under leaden skies; but suppose some glorious day when the air dances under a blue, sunlit sky—such was the May of their love in which Etienne had laid all his sorrows at Gabrielle's feet, and the young girl had saved up all her joys to bring them to her lord. Etienne had had but one grief in his life, the death of his mother; he was to have but one love—Gabrielle.

But coarse, brutal ambition broke the harmony of this honeyed existence. The Duke d'Herouville, steeped in the cunning of an old veteran, had no sooner given his word to the leech than he regretted it. The Baron d'Artagnon, lieutenant of his artillery company, had his entire confidence in political matters. The Baron was a man of hard and rugged features, a sort of butcher, tall and powerfully built, zealous in the service of his king, rude in his manners, of iron will and skilful in action, of noble birth but ambitious with the honor of a soldier and the cunning of politics. His hand, large and hairy, would be a good index of the man's character. His manners were rough, his speech was terse and to the point. Now the Governor had charged the Baron to look into the leech's behavior toward the heir-presumptive. In spite of the secrecy which surrounded Gabrielle it was difficult to deceive the lieutenant. He heard the singing of two voices, and he saw the hut on the shore lighted up at night. He guessed that the care taken by Etienne with his toilet and apparel and the many orders for flowers must point to a woman somewhere. Then he occasionally met Gabrielle's nurse on the road between the chateau and Forcalier, carrying linen and other articles for Gabrielle's use to the hut. The Baron determined to see the leech's daughter. He saw her and promptly fell in love. Beauvouloir was rich. The Duke would be furious at the good man's audacity. The Baron d'Artagnon based his hopes on this. The Duke, on hearing that his son was in love, would want to marry him to the daughter of some noble house, the heiress of several estates; and, in order to separate Etienne from his sweetheart it would only be necessary to make Gabrielle unfaithful by giving her in marriage to some nobleman whose lands were mortgaged. The Baron had no estate. This would have been an excellent arrangement for ordinary people, but it could not succeed with Etienne and Gabrielle. Chance, however, had already done the Baron d'Artagnon a good turn.

During his sojourn in Paris the Duke had avenged Maximilien's death by killing his son's adversary, and he had obtained for Etienne the opportunity of an alliance with the heiress of a branch of the House of Grandlieu—a fine-looking and disdainful young lady, but who was flattered by the hope of some day becoming Duchess d'Herouville. The Duke hoped to marry his son to Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, but when he heard that his son loved the daughter of a miserable leech, he immediately resolved to carry out his design at all hazards. To him, Etienne's wishes had nothing to do with the matter. It has been shown already how brutally this coarse man looked upon love. He had allowed his wife to die within a few feet of him, without heeding a single one of her groans. Probably he had never in his life been seized with a more violent fit of anger than when he received the last despatch from the Baron, advising him to what lengths Beauvouloir's designs had gone. The Duke ordered out his coaches and set out for Rouen, taking with him the Countess de Grandlieu, her sister, the Marchioness de Noirmontier, and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, on the pretext of showing them the Province of Normandy. Some days before his arrival—and no one knew where the rumors originated—nothing was talked of, from Herouville to Rouen, but the passion of the Duke de Nivron for Gabrielle Beauvouloir, the daughter of the celebrated leech. The Rouen people spoke of it to the Duke during the banquet which was given in his honor, for the guests were only too delighted to irritate the Despot of Normandy. This was the last straw. The Duke sent word to his lieutenant to keep his expected arrival at the chateau a profound secret, at the same time giving him orders to prevent what he considered a great misfortune.

In the meantime Etienne and Gabrielle had come to the end of their line in love's labyrinths, and neither of them was anxious to return to outer air. One day they were standing before the window which had been the silent witness of so many scenes. Their conversation had gradually melted into a dreamy silence. At moments, when he held Gabrielle's hand to his lips, the young Duke's eyes would fill with tears. More fortunate than his mother, at that moment he was happier in his love than she had ever been. Etienne looked out at the sea, which was a sheet of gold shoreward, but against the horizon it was black and streaked with the long lines of white that herald the coming of a storm. Gabrielle knew his thoughts and was silent. A single look, in which their souls were visible, was all they needed to understand each other. Etienne's head sank on Gabrielle's shoulder, whose fair hair fell in waves over his face, and the young girl passed her arm around his neck to give him better support. And so they remained, without speaking, until night came. They might be likened to an angel, who, resting on the earth, awaits but the Divine signal to ascend to heaven. Their souls were one.

"Will you take me home now?" said Gabrielle, the first to awake from the delicious revery.

"Why should we part?" replied Etienne.

"We should be together always," she said.

"Let us stay!"

"Yes."

Old Beauvouloir's heavy tread was heard in the next room. The leech found the two children standing apart, though he had seen them in each other's arms at the window. Even the purest love craves for mystery.

"My child," said he to Gabrielle, "you should not remain here so late without a light!"

"Why not?" said she. "You know very well that we love each other and that he is the lord of the chateau."

"My children," replied Beauvouloir, "if you love each other and wish to pass your lives together you must marry; but your marriage is subject to the will of the Duke . . ."

"My father promised to grant all my wishes," interrupted Etienne.

"Write to him, then, my lord," replied the leech. "Tell him your desire, and give your letter to me that I may attach it to one which I myself have just written. Bertrand will set out at once with the communications. I have just learned that the Duke is at Rouen; but he is bringing the heiress of the House of Grandlieu, and I hardly think he intends her for himself. . . . If I listened to my forebodings I would take Gabrielle away this very night. . . ."

"Separate us!" cried Etienne, who staggered as from a blow and leaned on the young girl for support.

"Father!"

"Gabrielle," said the leech, holding out to her a bottle which he had taken from the table and which she applied to Etienne's nostrils—"Gabrielle, I knew long ago that nature intended you for each other, but I wished to prepare the Duke for a marriage which would upset all his plans—and the devil has forestalled me. Your lover is the Duke de Nivron, and you are only the daughter of a poor leech."

"My father swore to deny me nothing," said Etienne calmly.

"He also swore to me that he would consent to anything I might do to provide you with a wife," replied the leech; "but if he does not keep his promises?"

Etienne seemed dazed.

"The sea was very black this evening," he said after a moment of silence.

"If you could ride a horse, my lord," said the leech, "I would recommend you to fly with Gabrielle this very night, I know you both so well that I am sure your union would be a happy one. The Duke would probably confine me in one of his dungeons for the rest of my days when he learned of your flight, but I would die gladly if my death would insure your happiness. But, alas! for you to mount a horse would be to risk Gabrielle's life as well as your own. We must face the Governor's wrath here."

"Here!" repeated the poor boy.

"We have been betrayed by some one in the chateau, who has communicated with your father," continued Beauvouloir.

"Let us throw ourselves together in the sea," Etienne whispered to the young girl, who was on her knees beside her lover.

She smiled and nodded her head. Beauvouloir understood.

"My lord," he continued, "your courage has made you eloquent; love should make you irresistible. By confessing your love to the Duke you will confirm my letter, which is couched in strong language. I do not believe all is lost. I love my daughter as dearly as you love her, and I am as ready to defend her."

Etienne raised his head.

"The sea was very black this evening," he said.

"It was like a carpet of gold at our feet," replied Gabrielle, in a melodious voice.

Etienne sent for lights and seated himself at the table to write to his father. On one side of his chair Gabrielle knelt in silence, her eyes fixed on the writing, but not reading it. She read everything on Etienne's brow. On the other side was Beauvouloir, whose face, usually so jovial, was now overcast with gloom. A voice in his heart was saying to the leech—

"His mother's fate will be his own!"

When he finished the letter, Etienne handed it to the old man, who at once gave it to Bertrand. The old retainer's horse was standing saddled and bridled, and he himself was ready. He rode off and met the Duke some four leagues from Herouville.

"Take me out through the turret door," said Gabrielle to her lover when they were alone.

They went through the Cardinal's library together and descended the turret stairs. At the bottom of these stairs was the door the key of which had been given to Gabrielle by Etienne. Stunned by the premonition of evil, the poor child left in the turret the torch which served him to light Gabrielle's path. On arriving within a few paces of the little garden the two lovers paused. Emboldened by a vague fear that they might not meet again, they exchanged, in the silent darkness, their first kiss, in which the soul and the senses were united. Then Gabrielle fled.

Just as the Duke de Nivron was ascending the staircase, after having closed the turret door, a cry of terror from Gabrielle struck his ear with the shock of a lightning flash which blinds the eye. Etienne crossed the apartments of the chateau, descended by the grand staircase, gained the beach, and ran toward Gabrielle's house, in which he saw a light.

On reaching the little garden, by the light of the lamp which illumined the nurse's spinning-wheel, Gabrielle saw a man in the chair usually occupied by the nurse. At the sound of her footsteps the man came toward her. The appearance of the Baron d'Artagnon—for it was he—justified Gabrielle's terror.

"You are the daughter of Beauvouloir, the Duke's physician?" said the lieutenant of the artillery company when Gabrielle had somewhat recovered from her fright.

"Yes, sir."

"I have matters of the highest importance to communicate to you. I am the Baron d'Artagnon, the lieutenant of the artillery company commanded by the Duke d'Herouville."

Considering the circumstances in which the lovers were placed, Gabrielle was struck both by the words and the tone of frankness in which they were spoken.

"Your nurse is there, she might overhear us; come with me," said the Baron.

He went out, followed by Gabrielle. They walked over to the beach which was behind the house.

"You need fear nothing," said the Baron.

"Dear child," he went on, trying to give his voice a gentler tone, "you and your father are on the brink of an abyss in which you may fall to-morrow; I could not see this without warning you. The Duke is furious with your father and yourself; he suspects that you have ensnared his son, whom he would rather see dead than your husband: so much for his son. As to your father, here is the determination he has come to. Nine years ago your father was implicated in a criminal matter. The Duke, knowing your father's innocence, protected him from the law; but he is going to have him seized and given up to justice. Your father will be tortured to death; but, as a favor for the services he has rendered his master, he may have his sentence changed to hanging. I do not know what the Duke has decided to do with you, but I do know that you can save the Duke de Nivron from his father's wrath, Beauvouloir from the horrible fate which awaits him, and yourself."

"What must I do?" cried Gabrielle.

"Throw yourself at the feet of the Duke, confess to him that his son loves you against your wishes, and tell him that you do not love him. As a proof of this, consent to marry any man whom the Duke may please to designate as your husband. He is generous, and will see that you are well provided for."

"I can do anything except deny my love."

"But that is necessary in order to save your father, yourself, and the Duke de Nivron."

"Etienne," said she, "will die, and I too!"

"The Duke de Nivron will be sorry to lose you, but he will live for the honor of his house; you will simply resign yourself to becoming the wife of a baron instead of a duke, and your father will live," replied the lieutenant.

At that moment Etienne arrived at the house; he did not see Gabrielle and uttered a piercing cry.

"Here he is!" cried the young girl; "let me go to reassure him!"

"I shall come for your answer to-morrow morning," said the Baron.

"I shall consult my father," she replied.

"You will not see him again: I have just received an order to seize him and send him to Rouen, chained and under a guard," said he, leaving Gabrielle terror-stricken.

The young girl ran into the house and found Etienne amazed at the silence which followed his first question—

"Where is she?"

"Here I am," gasped the girl, staggering into the house, her face pale as death.

"What is the matter?" said he; "you cried out!"

"Yes, I fell against . . ."

"No, sweetheart," he interrupted; "I heard a man's footstep."

"Etienne, we must have offended God. Let us go down on our knees and pray. I will tell you all afterward."

Etienne and Gabrielle fell on their knees and the nurse counted her beads.

"O God," said the young girl, with a rapture which rose above the terrestrial spheres, "if we have not sinned against Thy Holy Commandments, if we have offended neither the Church nor the King, we, who are one in spirit, and in whom love shines with a purity such as Thou hast given the pearl of the sea, we beseech Thee that we be not parted either in this world or in the next!"

"Dear mother," added Etienne, "who art in Heaven, beseech the Virgin that if we may not live happily, Gabrielle and I, we may at least die together without pain. Call us. We will go to thee!"

Then, after saying their evening prayers, Gabrielle related her interview with the Baron d'Artagnon.

"Gabrielle," said the young man, with the courage of a despairing love, "I shall resist my father."

He kissed her on the forehead, but not on the lips; then he returned to the chateau, determined to confront the terrible man who was a curse to his life. He did not know that Gabrielle's house had been surrounded by soldiers immediately after his departure.

The next day Etienne was overwhelmed with grief when, on going to see Gabrielle, he found her a prisoner; but Gabrielle sent her nurse to tell him that she would die rather than betray him. Moreover, she had found a way to outwit her guards, and she would take refuge in the Cardinal's library, where no one would ever think of looking for her; but she did not yet know when she would be able to carry out her plan. Etienne remained in his room, where his courage was rapidly oozing away under the stress of anxiety.

At three o'clock the Duke's coaches and entire following reached the chateau, where he expected to sup with his company. At nightfall the Countess de Grandlieu, to whom her daughter gave her arm, the Duke and the Marchioness de Noirmontier, ascended the grand staircase in deep silence, for the stern looks of their master had frightened his retainers. Though the Baron had learned of Gabrielle's escape, he had represented to the Duke that she was still a prisoner; but he was fearful lest he had prejudiced the success of his own particular project, in case the Duke considered his plans upset by her escape. The ferocity of those two terrible faces was badly disguised under the veneer of politeness. The Duke had sent word to his son that he must come to the salon. When the company entered, the Baron d'Artagnon recognized from Etienne's countenance that Gabrielle's escape was still unknown to him.

"This is my son," said the old Duke, taking Etienne by the hand and presenting him to the ladies.

Etienne bowed without a word. The Countess and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu exchanged glances, which did not escape the old man.

"Your daughter will be but poorly matched," said he in a low voice to the Countess; "is not that what crossed your mind?"

"Quite the contrary, my dear Duke," replied the mother, smiling.

The Marchioness de Noirmontier, who was standing beside her sister, began to laugh softly. This laugh pierced Etienne's heart, whom the sight of the tall young lady had already terrified.

"Well, Sir Duke," said his father in a low voice, mockingly, "have I not brought you a fine mate? What do you say to that slip of a girl, my cherub?"

The old Duke did not imagine for a moment that his son would dare to disobey him. He thought that Etienne would be as easily bent to his will as his mother had been.

"So that he have a child, little do I care what becomes of him," the old man said to himself.

"Father," said the boy quietly, "I do not understand you."

"Come with me, I have a word to say to you," said the Duke, opening the door leading into the state bedroom.

Etienne followed his father. The three ladies, seized by a curiosity which was shared by the Baron d'Artagnon, gathered about the door, which the Duke had left slightly ajar.

"My fine Benjamin," said the old man, softening his voice, "I have chosen this handsome young woman to be your wife; she is heiress of the estates belonging to the younger branch of the House of Grandlieu, one of the first families in Brittany. So remember all the pretty sayings you have read in your books, and make yourself agreeable to her."

"Father, is it not the first duty of a gentleman to keep his word?"

"Yes!"

"Well, when I forgave you the death of my mother, who died in this room because she married you, did you not promise never to oppose my wishes? 'I will obey you as the god of the family!' you said. I ask no favor of you, I only ask liberty of action in a matter which is life and death to me, and which concerns me only—my marriage."

"I understood," said the old man, the blood mounting to his temples, "that you would not refuse to continue our noble race."

"You made no conditions," said Etienne. "I do not know what love has to do with the race, but I do know that I love the daughter of your old friend Beauvouloir, and the granddaughter of your friend the Belle Romaine."

"But she is dead," replied the old giant in a tone at once tragic and sneering, and which betrayed his intention to make away with the girl if she were not already dead.

A deep silence followed his words.

The old man caught sight of the three ladies and the Baron d'Artagnon.

At that supreme moment Etienne's sensitive ear caught the sound of singing. It was poor Gabrielle, who was in the library, and took that means of letting her lover know where she was.

The disowned child, whom his father's terrible words had plunged into the abyss of death, returned to the surface of life on the wings of that melody. Though the shock had broken his heart, he collected all his strength, raised his head, looked his father in the face for the first time in his life, meeting scorn with scorn, and said in accents of hate—

"A gentleman should not lie!"

He gained the door in a single bound and cried—

"Gabrielle!"

All at once the gentle creature appeared in the dusk, like a lily in the midst of its leaves, and trembled before the group of mocking women, who had heard of Etienne's love affair.

Black as a thunder-cloud, the old Duke, beside himself with rage, came forward. Any other man would have hesitated between the prolongation of his race and a mésalliance, but the Duke was the embodiment of the ferocity which up to that time had solved every human difficulty by cutting the Gordian knot with the sword. At such a crisis as this, when his dearest hopes were dashed to the ground, his nature was sure to triumph. Twice given the lie by an abhorred creature, his thousand times accursed son, and more hated than ever at the moment when his despised weakness defied an authority hitherto invincible, he no longer had the feelings of a father or even of a man. The tiger leaped from his hiding-place. The old man, rejuvenated in his revenge, hurled at the two sweetest of angels that ever trod the earth a look so full of hate that it struck them like a blow.

"Perish, then, both of you—you, misshapen wretch, proof of my dishonor; and you, miserable jade with the viper's tongue, who have poisoned my race!"

The horror of these words pierced to the hearts of the two children. As Etienne saw the blade in his father's hand flash over Gabrielle's head he dropped dead, and Gabrielle, while trying to support him, fell over his body—a corpse.

The Duke slammed the door with passion, and said to Mademoiselle de Grandlieu—

"I will marry you myself!"

"And you are hearty enough to have a long line of ancestors," added the Countess in the ear of the old man, who had served seven kings of France.

A MAD MUSICIAN

AS FOUR O'CLOCK struck, and New Year's Day of the year eighteen hundred and thirty-one was dispensing its packages of sugar-plums, the Palais Royal was crowded and the restaurants were beginning to fill.

At that moment a brougham drew up at the entrance. The young man who stepped out was undoubtedly a foreigner; otherwise, he would not have been followed by such a gorgeously attired attendant, nor would he have sported a coat-of-arms, which still excited the hate of the revolutionists. The young man went into the Palais Royal and followed the throng about the galleries, without seeming to be surprised at the slow pace at which the crowd compelled him to walk. That rather foppish bearing which is sometimes ironically termed a diplomatic strut seemed natural to him; but his dignity savored a little of the theatrical. Though his features were fine and grave, his hat, to which was buckled a tuft of black feathers, was tipped a little too much to one side and belied his gravity by the least air of rakishness. His eyes, languid and half closed, looked out contemptuously at the crowd.

"There's a fine young man," said a grisette in an undertone, stepping aside to let him pass.

"And he knows it, too," replied her companion, who was plain, aloud.

After walking round the gallery the young man looked successively at his watch and the sky, made an impatient gesture, and went into a tobacco shop, where he lighted a cigar. Then he paused before a mirror and glanced over his costume, which was perhaps a little finer than French good taste allows. He adjusted his collar and black velvet waistcoat, from which dangled a heavy gold chain of Swiss make. Then, after having thrown his velvet lined cloak gracefully over his left shoulder, he continued his walk, without paying any attention to the curiosity he excited. When lights began to appear in the shops and it seemed to him to be dark enough for his purpose, he turned his steps toward the square in front of the Palais Royal, after the manner of one who fears to be recognized, for he edged along the square as far as the fountain, whence, under the friendly shelter of the line of cabs, he reached the Rue Froidmanteau, a dark and badly paved street—a sort of sewer tolerated by the police near the well-kept Palais Royal, just as an Italian butler would allow a careless footman to sweep into a corner of the staircase the dust of the apartment. The young man hesitated. From his action he might have been taken for a shopkeeper on a Sunday outing, gaping over a gutter swollen by a rainstorm. However, the hour was well chosen for any questionable amusement. Earlier, he might have been recognized; later, he might have been forestalled. To have been attracted by one of those glances which encourage without inviting; to have followed for an hour, for a day perhaps, a young and pretty woman, to have delved into her thoughts and given to their triviality a thousand happy interpretations; to have had sudden and irresistible sympathies; to have imagined, under the inspiration of a passing fancy, one of those adventures which are described by novelists as occurring in by-gone days for the simple reason that they can never happen again; to have dreamed of balconies, guitars, plots, keyholes and Spanish cloaks; to have written a poem or a fantasy—have we not all experienced such moments? The most natural feelings are those which we confess with the most repugnance, and fatuity is one of those feelings. When the lesson has been learned, the Parisian profits by it or forgets it, and there is little harm done; but it would not be so in the case of the young foreigner, who was beginning to pay very dearly for his Parisian education.

This stroller was a Milanese nobleman, banished from his country, and whom some political escapades had made unpopular with the Austrian Government. Count Andrea Marcosini had been received at Paris with that effusiveness—so truly French—which is quick to assert itself whenever it is a question of a pretty wit, a well-sounding name accompanied by an income of two hundred thousand francs and a charming presence. For such a man exile should be a pleasure trip; his wealth was simply held by a trustee, and his friends had informed him that after an absence of two years or more he might return to his native country without danger. After having rhymed *crudeli affami* with *i miei tiranni* in a dozen sonnets or so and opened his purse to as many needy Italian refugees, Count Andrea, who had the misfortune to be a poet, considered his duty to his country accomplished. Since his arrival, therefore, he had given himself up, without a thought, to the pleasures of every kind which Paris offers to every one rich enough to buy them. His talents and good looks had won him considerable success with women, whom he loved collectively as beseemed his age, but among whom he had as yet given none the preference. Moreover, this taste was subordinate to that for music and poetry, to which he had devoted himself from childhood, and in which he deemed it more difficult, and consequently more glorious, to succeed than in gallantry, which nature had, in a fashion, made easy for him. Of a complex nature, like so many men, he allowed himself to be easily carried away by the seductions of luxury, without which he could not have lived, and for the same reason he attached great importance to social distinctions, which his opinions belied. In the same way his theories as an artist, thinker and poet were often at variance with his tastes, feelings and habits as a millionnaire; but he was consoled for these contradictions when he reflected that so many Parisians whom he knew were liberal by interest and aristocratic by nature. Therefore, it was not without considerable uneasiness that he found himself, on the 31st of December, in the year eighteen hundred and thirty-one, on foot in muddy weather, following a woman whose dress proclaimed extreme poverty, and who was no prettier than many others he could see any evening at the Bouffons, or the Opera, or in society, and certainly not so young as Madame de Manerville, who had promised him an interview for this very evening, and who perhaps was still expecting him. But in the look which the woman gave him, at once tender and defiant, fleeting yet full of meaning, there was so much sorrow and so much stifled joy! And she had blushed so vividly when, on leaving the shop in which she had been occupied for some few minutes, her eyes had squarely met those of the Milanese who was waiting for her some distance off. There were so many *ifs* and *buts* that the Count, seized by one of those impulses which cannot be explained, followed the woman.

He had come down to chasing her like an old Parisian would a grisette. He carefully noticed all the details of her dress to see if he could not dislodge the absurd and idiotic notion which had come into his head. Occasionally, half turning, the unknown had glanced at him with the timidity of a startled fawn, and on seeing that she was still pursued, she had quickened her steps as though she wished to escape from him. Nevertheless, whenever a crush of vehicles or some similar obstruction had brought them nearer together, the young noble had observed her flinch under his gaze, though none of her features expressed displeasure. These certain signs of an inward struggle had clinched the matter, and so he had followed her as far as the Rue Froidmanteau, which the young woman turned up, after many detours, thinking, no doubt, that she had evaded her pursuer. But she was mistaken. Andrea, who was close behind her, had seen her disappear in one of the gloomiest alleyways of that gloomy street, whose very name was unknown to him. On stepping back a couple of steps to better examine the locality, he stumbled against an ugly looking man and asked him for information. The man laid his right hand on a heavy stick, placed his left hand on his hip, and replied with a single word: "Rascal!" but, as he obtained a better view of the Italian, on whom the light of the street lamp fell, his face took on a crafty expression.

"Ah! excuse me, sir," he said, changing his tone, "that is a restaurant, a sort of table d'hote where the fare is very poor and cheese is put into the soup. But perhaps the gentleman is looking for such a place, for it is easy to see that the gentleman is Italian. Italians always like finery and cheese. If the gentleman wishes I can show him a better restaurant. I have an aunt who lives close by and who is very fond of foreigners."

Andrea drew his cloak up to his eyes and hurried out of the street, filled with disgust at the filthy person who had addressed him, whose dress and manners were so in harmony with the building into which his unknown had gone. When he returned to his apartments he found a new delight in all his little comforts; and he passed the evening at the house of the Marchioness d'Espard, to try and rid himself of the last vestige of the whim which had so tyrannically ruled him the earlier part of the day.

But in the solitude of his bedroom the vision of the day returned to him, only clearer and more animated than the reality. He again saw the unknown walking ahead of him; he again wished to speak to her, but dared not, he, Marcosini, a Milanese nobleman! He saw her turn down the dark alley through which she had escaped him, and reproached himself for not having followed her. "For it is clear," he said to himself, "if she took such pains to avoid me and put me off her track, that she must love me. With that class of women resistance is a proof of love. If I had been more venturesome it is probable that I should have been disgusted and now sleeping peacefully instead of worrying my brain over the matter." The Count was in the habit of analyzing his feelings, as do involuntarily all men who have as much intellect as heart, and he was surprised that the memory of the unknown of the Rue Froidmanteau remained with him in the commonplace of stern reality rather than in the idealized grandeur of dreams. And yet if his fantasy had deprived the woman of the livery of poverty it would have spoiled her for him; he loved her in her bedraggled skirts, run-down shoes and shabby straw hat!

The gloomy house into which she had gone was part of her charm to him. "Am I then wedded to vice?" he said to himself in a fright. "Surely I am not so far gone as that. I cannot be a blasé old man at twenty-three years of age!" But the very strength of his whim reassured him a little.

Such a singular conflict of the mind might surprise anyone accustomed to the ways of the world in Paris; but it should be taken into consideration that Count Andrea Marcosini was not a Frenchman.

Educated by two priests, who, following the instructions of a devoted father, watched over him strictly, Andrea had not fallen in love with his cousin when he was eleven years old, nor had he made love to his mother's chambermaid at sixteen; he had not attended colleges where most of the instruction received is not included in the curriculum; finally, he had only been in Paris a short time. He was, therefore, accessible to those sudden and powerful impressions against which the French system of education and morality forms such an effective protection. In Southern lands, love at first sight is not unusual. A Gascon gentleman, whose susceptibility was tempered by a good deal of common-sense, and who had a thousand preventatives against sudden attacks of the heart and intellect, had once advised the Count to hold counsel with himself at least once a month for the purpose of clearing the atmosphere of his mind, which, without such precautions, often gets out of order. Andrea recalled the advice. "Well," said he, "I shall begin to morrow, January 1st."

This explains why Count Andrea Marcosini looked about him so anxiously before turning into the Rue Froidmanteau. The man of fashion embarrassed the wooer. He hesitated a long time, but, after having made a last appeal to his courage, he walked up the street firmly and found the house without difficulty. There he paused again. Would the woman come up to his expectations? Was he not about to make a false move? Then he remembered the Italian table d'hôte and resolved to make dinner his excuse for entering. He walked up the alleyway, at the end of which he found, after much feeling about, the damp, worn steps of a stairway which a noble Italian lord might easily take for a ladder. Drawn toward the first landing by a little lamp which was placed on the floor, and by a strong smell of cooking, he pushed the door ajar and peered through. He saw a room black with dirt and smoke, in which a waiter was busily engaged laying a table of twenty or more covers. None of the guests had yet arrived. After glancing about the badly lighted room, the wall-paper of which was hanging in strips, the young nobleman seated himself before a stove which was smoking and crackling in a corner. The proprietor, attracted by the noise of the Count's entrance, soon made his appearance. Imagine a cook, tall, thin and dried-up looking, with an abnormally heavy flat nose, and with a habit of continually looking about him in a sly fashion. When he saw Andrea, whose whole appearance signified wealth, Signor Giardini bowed respectfully. The Count informed him that he would like to dine occasionally with a few fellow-countrymen, and that he would pay for a certain number of meals in advance; he contrived to give the conversation a confidential twist in order to gain his point without loss of time. Scarcely had he spoken of his unknown than Signor Giardini made a grotesque gesture and looked at his guest knowingly, the slightest suspicion of a smile hovering about his lips.

"*Basta!*" he said, "I understand! Your Lordship has two reasons for coming here. La Signora Gambara has not been wasting her time if she has contrived to interest a lord as generous as you appear to be. I will tell you in a few words all we know here concerning this poor woman, who is indeed worthy of pity. Her husband was born, I believe, in Cremona, and came here from Germany; he wished to introduce new music and new instruments among the Germans. Is not that pitiful?" said Giardini, shrugging his shoulders. "Signor Gambara, who believes himself to be a great composer, does not seem to be any too wise in other ways. But he is an excellent fellow, a good talker and sometimes quite agreeable, especially after a few glasses of wine, which he cannot often afford, poor man. He works night and day composing imaginary operas and symphonies instead of trying to earn his living honestly. His poor wife is compelled to work herself to the bone! But what can you expect? She loves her husband as if he were her father, and cares for him as if he were her child. Many young gentlemen have dined here for the purpose of making love to madame, but they have not succeeded," said he, dwelling significantly on the last word. "La Signora Marianna is prudent, my dear sir, too prudent for her good! The poor woman is scarcely able to live. You probably think her husband rewards her devotion? . . . Bah! he hardly gives her a smile. Heaven alone knows how they exist, for this devil of a man not only earns nothing himself, but he spends the money his wife makes for instruments, which he takes to pieces, lengthens, shortens, adjusts and readjusts until the sounds that come out of them would frighten a cat. Then he is happy. And yet he is the gentlest, the best of men, and not at all lazy; he works continually. How do I account for it? He is mad and he does not know it. I have seen him, when filing and polishing his musical instruments, eat black bread with a relish that I envied myself—I, who have the best table in Paris. Yes, your Excellency, before an hour has passed you will know what manner of man I am. The improvements you will find in my Italian cookery will astonish you. Your Excellency, I am a Neapolitan, that is to say, a born cook. But of what use is instinct without knowledge; I have passed thirty years of my life acquiring knowledge, and see what it has brought me to! My history is that of every man of talent; my trials and experiments have ruined three restaurants, founded at Naples, Parma and Rome respectively. To-day, still obliged to make a livelihood of my art, I am often carried away by my dominant passion. I set my favorite dishes before these poor refugees. I am ruining myself by this! Foolish, you say? I know it; but what can I do? I forget myself in my art and I cannot resist concocting a dish which pleases me. And they know it, too, the rogues. They can tell well enough whether my wife or myself does the cooking. What happens? Out of sixty or more guests who used to surround my table when I commenced this miserable restaurant, there are now but a score who patronize me regularly. The Piedmontese and the Savoyards have gone; but the *connoisseurs*, the men of taste, and the true Italians remain. Am I not making a sacrifice for these people? I give them a dinner for twenty-five sous which costs me double."

Giardini's speech savored so much of the artless roguishness of the Neapolitan that the amused Count almost imagined himself back in Gerolamo.

"As this is the case, my dear host," he said familiarly to the cook, "since chance and your confidence have let me into the secret of your daily sacrifices, allow me to double the amount."

As he said this, Andrea spun a forty-franc piece on the stove. Giardini picked it up and religiously returned him two francs fifty centimes with an elaborate ceremony which seemed to please him.

"In a few minutes," continued Giardini, "you will see your *donnina.* I shall place you next her husband, and if you wish to gain his goodwill, talk music to him. I have invited them both, poor things! On New Year's Day I regale my guests with dishes in which I believe I surpass myself."

Signor Giardini's voice was drowned in the noisy congratulations of the diners, who arrived singly and in couples, seating themselves round the table in that casual manner which is usual at restaurants. Giardini remained at the Count's side and pointed out to him his regular customers. He was eager to amuse a man who, his Neapolitan instinct told him, might be worth a good deal to him.

"That," said he, "is a poor composer who is trying to pass from ballad music to opera but cannot. He complains of directors, music dealers and, in fact, of every one except himself, than whom he certainly has no worse enemy. You can see from his pink-and-white complexion, his evident self-satisfaction and his delicate features, how well suited he is for ballad music. The man with him who looks like a match-seller is Gigelmi, one of the most famous musicians of the day and the greatest known Italian orchestral conductor; but he is now deaf and spends the rest of his life sadly enough, deprived as he is of the only thing which brightened it. Oh! there is our great Ottoboni, the most artless old man that ever lived, but he is suspected of being the most zealous of those who wish to regenerate Italy. I wonder how they could banish such an agreeable old man?"

Here Giardini glanced at the Count, who, feeling himself sounded as to his political opinions, took refuge in an immobility quite Italian.

"A man who is obliged to cook for the public cannot have an opinion in regard to politics, your Excellency," continued the cook. "But any one looking at that man, who looks more like a wolf than a lion, would have said the same thing to the Austrian Ambassador himself. Moreover, we are approaching a time when liberty, no longer oppressed, will resume its triumphant sway! At least that is what these good people believe," he whispered in the Count's ear, "and why should I contradict them? As for me, I do not hate absolutism, your Excellency! Every great genius is an absolutist! Well, though full of talent, Ottoboni gives himself no end of trouble for the instruction of Italy; he writes little books with which to enlighten the intelligence of her children and common people; these he contrives to have sent to his country. In fact, he takes all manner of means to change the sentiments of our poor land, which prefers power to liberty, and perhaps wisely!"

The Count's face was so impassive that the cook could glean no inkling of his political views.

"Ottoboni," he continued, "is a noble man and very charitable; all the refugees love him; for, your Excellency, a liberal may have good qualities. Oho!" Giardini exclaimed, "here comes a journalist"—pointing to a man who was dressed in that ridiculous fashion which used to be attributed to poets of the garret. His coat was out at the elbows, his boots were run down at the heels, his hat was shiny and his overcoat was in a state of deplorable dilapidation. "Your Excellency, that poor man is quite talented and is incorruptible! He was born at the wrong time, but he publishes the truth abroad and so no one will tolerate him. He reports theatrical matters for a couple of obscure newspapers, although he is clever enough to write for the great journals. Poor man! The others are hardly worth mentioning," said he, observing that at the sight of the composer's wife the Count paid no more attention to him.

When she caught sight of Andrea, the Signora Marianna started and blushed vividly.

"There he is!" said Giardini in an undertone, pressing the Count's arm and pointing out to him a tall man. "See how pale and sad he is, poor man! His hobby has not been kind to him to-day, I fancy."

Andrea's amorous preoccupation was interrupted by a fascination which Gambara's appearance had called forth in his artistic nature. The composer was more than forty years old, but, though his broad and high forehead was marked by several parallel but not deep wrinkles, and in spite of his hollow temples, where the blue veins showed through a transparent skin, and the deep sockets of his black eyes with their light eyelashes, the lower part of his face gave him a youthful appearance by its calm and the softness of its outline. An observer would see at the first glance that in this man passion had been subordinated to intellect, which alone had grown old. Andrea shot a quick look at Marianna, who was watching him. At the sight of that fine Italian head, whose exact proportions and splendid coloring revealed one of those organizations in which all the human powers are perfectly balanced, he sounded the depths which separated those two creatures united by chance. Cheered by the good omen which he fancied he saw in their dissimilarity, he did not attempt to control a feeling which should be a barrier between the beautiful Marianna and himself. He already felt a sort of respectful pity for this man, whose only comfort she was, as he contemplated the calm submission to fate betrayed in Gambara's whole expression.

After expecting to find the man one of those grotesque creatures drawn by German novelists and *libretto* writers, he saw a simple and reserved man, whose manners and bearing, in spite of their quaintness, were not entirely lacking in nobility. Without being at all pretentious, his dress was neater, perhaps, than one might have expected from his extreme poverty, and his linen attested the tender care which watched over the slightest details of his life. Andrea raised his moist eyes to Marianna, who did not blush, and who half smiled in a way which seemed to express a sort of pride in this mute homage. The Count was so much in love that the least sign of encouragement was noticed by him, and he thought himself loved because she understood him. Then he began to attempt to win over the husband rather than the wife, by directing all his efforts against poor Gambara, who, suspecting nothing, gulped down Signor Giardini's wine without tasting it. The Count opened the conversation on some trivial subject; but in the first words spoken he found out that this intellect, supposed to be fixed upon one idea, was remarkably clear on a great many others, and he saw that he would do better to try to understand the man's ideas rather than to flatter his caprices. The guests, a hungry lot, whose wit came to the surface at the sight of any sort of a meal, good or bad, made the unkindest remarks at Gambara's expense, and only waited for the end of the first course to give wing to their pleasantries. One of the refugees, whose frequent oglings betrayed an interest in Marianna, and who evidently thought that the best way to please her was to ridicule her husband, opened fire in an attempt to initiate the new-comer into the manners and customs of the company.

"It is quite a long time since we heard anything of the opera 'Mahomet,'" he said, smiling at Marianna; "can it be that, taken up with domestic duties and absorbed by the pleasures of the hearth, Paolo Gambara has neglected a superhuman talent, has let his genius grow cold and his imagination run dry?"

Gambara was acquainted with all the guests, and he felt himself so much above them that he hardly took the trouble to reply to their attacks; he made no answer.

"It is not given to every one," continued the journalist, "to have an intelligence capable of understanding the gentleman's musical elucidations, and that, undoubtedly, is the reason which prevents our divine *Maestro* from producing his work before the good Parisians."

"However," said the composer of ballad music, who had not opened his mouth except to swallow everything that came within his reach, "I know men of talent who to a certain extent represent Parisian opinion. I have some little musical reputation myself," he added modestly. "I owe it, it is true, only to a few vaudeville airs and the success of my dance music; but I expect in a short time to compose a Mass on the anniversary of Beethoven's death, which I believe will be better understood at Paris than anywhere else. Will you do me the honor, sir, to attend?" he said, addressing Andrea.

"Thank you," replied the Count, "I hardly consider myself gifted with the qualities necessary to an understanding of French music; but, sir, if you were dead and Beethoven had composed the Mass, I would not have failed to hear it."

This retort put an end to the persecution of Gambara for the new-comer's benefit. Andrea already felt some repugnance at the spectacle of this noble and pathetic madman exposed to such vulgar ridicule. He plunged eagerly into a heated discussion, in which Gambara occasionally joined. Whenever any good-natured witticism or pithy epigram would escape from Gambara's lips, the cook would glance pitifully at the composer and look meaningly at the Count, whispering in his ear—

"E matto!"

A moment came when the cook's sententious observations were interrupted by his absence to look after the second course, to which he attached great importance. While he was away, which was but a short time, Gambara bent his head to Andrea's ear.

"This good Giardini," he whispered, "threatens us today with a dish of his own making, which I warn you to distrust, although his wife has supervised its preparation. The good man has a mania for innovations. He has ruined himself by experiments, the last of which forced him to leave Rome without a passport, an incident on which he is silent. After having bought a restaurant on credit, he took the contract for a banquet given by a newly promoted cardinal. Giardini thought he had an opportunity of distinguishing himself. He succeeded. The same evening he was accused of an attempt to poison the whole assemblage, and was obliged to leave Rome without time in which to pack his trunks. That was the last straw, and now . . ."

Gambara touched his forehead with his finger and shook his head.

"However," he went on, "he is a good fellow. My wife assures me that we owe him many a good turn."

Giardini appeared, carefully carrying a dish which he placed in the centre of the table; then he returned modestly to his place by the side of Andrea, who was the first served. As soon as he tasted the food the Count found an impassable barrier between the first and second mouthfuls. His embarrassment was great; he tried hard not to displease the cook, who was watching him attentively. If the French restaurant keeper troubles himself little whether a dish which is paid for is liked or not, that is no reason for thinking that it is the same with an Italian restaurant keeper, who is often dissatisfied with faint praise. To gain time Andrea warmly complimented Giardini, but as he bent toward him he slid under the table a gold piece, at the same time asking the cook to go out and purchase some bottles of champagne for which he might have all the honor.

When the cook reappeared, all the plates were empty; the room echoed with flattering allusions to the proprietor. The wine soon went to the heads of the company, and the conversation, which up to that time had been a little stiff on account of the presence of a stranger, quickly passed the limits of reserve and soared up into the regions of political and artistic theories. Andrea, who knew no other intoxications than those of love and poetry, presently gained control of the general attention and easily turned the conversation to musical matters.

"Will you tell me, sir," he said to the composer of dance music, "how the Napoleon of light melodies can stoop to usurp the places of Palestrina, Pergolese and

Mozart, poor men who are to be hustled out of sight at the approach of this wonderful Funeral March?"

"Sir," said the composer, "a musician is always embarrassed to answer when his reply requires the assistance of one hundred skilled performers. Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven are nothing without an orchestra."

"Nothing?" continued the Count, "but every one knows that the immortal composer of 'Don Giovanni' and the 'Requiem' is called Mozart, and I am unfortunate enough to know of no composer of dance music who is so popular in drawing-rooms."

"Music exists independently of execution," said the orchestra director, who, in spite of his deafness, had caught some words of the discussion. "A musician as he glances through Beethoven's Symphony in C minor is soon transported to the world of fancy on the golden wings of the theme in G natural, repeated in E by the horns. He sees a whole universe of nature, by turns gorgeous in dazzling columns of light, cast into gloom by clouds of melancholy and uplifted by heavenly chords."

"Beethoven is surpassed by the new school," said the ballad-monger disdainfully.

"He is not yet understood," said the Count, "how can he be surpassed?"

Here Gambara tossed off a large glass of champagne, and accompanied his refreshment by a half smile of approval.

"Beethoven," the Count went on, "has reached the limits of instrumental music, and no one has been able to follow him."

Gambara assented by a nod of the head.

"His works are, above all, remarkable for the simplicity of their plan and the perfection of their execution," continued the Count. "With the majority of composers the orchestral parts are thrown in at random, and are only combined to produce momentary effects; their only connection with the entirety is in the time. In Beethoven the effects are, so to speak, arranged in advance. Like different regiments who contribute by their respective movements to the victory, the orchestral parts of Beethoven's symphonies obey commands given in the interest of the whole, and are subordinated to admirably conceived plans. In this particular they have a similarity with a genius of another sort. In the splendid historical works of Walter Scott, some obscure character comes forward at a given moment, and, by a thread woven through the plot, he carries it out to its logical conclusion."

"That is true!" said Gambara, to whom good sense seemed to come in inverse ratio to his sobriety.

Wishing to push his demonstration still further, Andrea for a moment forgot all his sympathies. He commenced to attack the European reputation of Rossini and the Italian school, questioning the merit of music which had triumphed night after night for thirty years in a hundred European theatres. He had a hard task before him. His first words raised a low murmur of disapproval; but neither the frequent interruptions, nor the exclamations, nor the frowns, nor the pitying looks, checked this ardent admirer of Beethoven.

"Compare," said he, "the sublime productions of the composer I have just mentioned with the music which one is pleased to call Italian. What paucity of ideas! What feebleness of style! Those uniform phrases, those weak cadenzas, those eternal bravura passages thrown in at random, regardless of the effect, that monotonous crescendo which Rossini has made popular, and which to-day is an integral part of every composition; and those vocal conjuring tricks—all go to make up a sort of blatant, babbling, trivial music, which has no merit except an occasional catchy air or neat voice effect. The Italian school has lost sight of the highest mission of art. Instead of trying to raise the public to its own level, it has descended to the level of the public; it has gained its popularity by accepting suffrages at all hands and addressing itself to the vulgar mind of the majority. This popularity is no better than street-corner juggling. In fact, the compositions of Rossini, in whom this music is personified, as well as those of the composers who have been influenced by him, seem to me at best fit only to collect a crowd about a street show or accompany the tricks of a clown. I prefer French music, and I can hardly say more. Long live the music of Germany! . . . When she knows how to sing," he added in an undertone.

This sally was followed by a long discussion, in which Andrea disported himself for more than a quarter of an hour in the most exalted regions of metaphysics with the ease of a somnambulist walking on a roof. Greatly interested in these subtleties, Gambara had not lost a word of the whole discussion; he began to speak as soon as Andrea had ceased, and immediately there was a movement of curiosity among the guests, several of whom left their seats.

"You attack the Italian school warmly," Gambara began, animated by champagne; "that, however, is a matter of indifference to me. Thank God, I have gone beyond those more or less melodic trifles. But the ordinary man knows little of that classic country where Germany and France learned their first lessons. While the works of Carissimi, Cavalli, Scarlati and Rossi were being played all over Italy, the violinists of the Paris opera had the singular privilege of playing the violin with gloves on! Lulli, who extended the empire of harmony, and was the first to classify discords, on his arrival in France found but two men, a cook and a mason, who possessed sufficient voice and intelligence to sing his music; he made a tenor of the first and metamorphosed the other into a bass. At that time Germany, with the exception of Sebastian Bach, knew nothing of music. But, sir," said Gambara in the humble tone of a man who fears his words may be treated with contempt or inattention, "although young, you have evidently studied these high questions of art, as otherwise you would not have been able to present them with such clearness."

This word brought a smile to the lips of most of his listeners, who had understood nothing of the distinctions established by Andrea. Giardini, convinced that the Count had meant no more than to string together a lot of meaningless phrases, nudged him gently, smiling in the superiority of a mystery to which he believed himself a party.

"In what you have just said there are many things which appear to me to be very just," Gambara continued; "but take care! your plea, while attacking Italian sensualism, seems to lean toward German idealism, which is a heresy not less deplorable. If men of sense and imagination like yourself deserted one camp only to pass over to another, and if they were not wise enough to remain neutral between the two extremes, we would be continuously a butt for the irony of those sophists who deny progress and who compare the genius of man to this tablecloth, which is too short for Signor Giardini's table, and covers one end at the expense of the other."

Giardini jumped out of his chair as if stung by a wasp; but a sudden reflection made him resume his dignity. He raised his eyes to heaven and again nudged the Count, who was beginning to think his host madder than Gambara, whose grave and solemn manner of speaking interested the Milanese intensely. Placed between these two madmen, one of whom was so noble and the other so vulgar, there were moments when the Count imagined himself suspended between the Sublime and the Ridiculous—the two sections into which all human creation is divided. Looking back at the chain of almost incredible incidents which had led him into that smoky hole, he believed himself the victim of some strange hallucination, and looked upon Gambara and Giardini as two abstractions.

However, at a final joke from the orchestra conductor, who answered Gambara, the guests went out amid bursts of laughter. Giardini went into the kitchen to make coffee for his favored guests, and his wife took away the tablecloth. The Count was next the stove, between Marianna and Gambara, in a position where he had, so to speak, sensualism on his left hand and idealism on his right. Gambara, meeting for the first time a man who did not laugh at him, wasted no time on generalities, and at once brought the conversation round to his life and works and the regeneration of music, of which he believed himself to be the Messiah.

"Listen, you who have not yet insulted me! I am going to tell you the story of my life, but not in order to parade my constancy to art, which does not emanate from myself, but from the glory of Him who gave me my being. You seem to be good and religiously inclined; if you do not believe in me you can at least pity me. Pity is of man; faith comes from God.

"I was born at Cremona. My father was a maker of musical instruments. He played well, but it was as a composer that he excelled. At a very early age, therefore, I learned the laws of musical construction both in their material and spiritual interpretations. The French turned my father and me out of our house. We were ruined by the war. When I was ten years old I began the vagrant life which is the lot of almost every man who attempts innovations in art, science or politics. Led by my passion for music, I went from theatre to theatre all over Italy, living on almost nothing, as they do there. Sometimes I played the bass violin in an orchestra, sometimes I sung in the chorus and sometimes I went under the stage with the stage-hands. In that way I studied music in all its phases, measuring the instrument and the human voice, asking myself in what they differed and in what they were alike, listening to operas and applying the laws which my father had taught me. I often made my way by repairing musical instruments. It was a hungry life in a country where the sun always shines and where art is everywhere, but where there is nothing for the artist. Rome is Queen of the Christian World only in name. I was sometimes well received and sometimes sent away on account of my poverty, but I did not lose courage; I listened to the voices within me which urged me on to fame.

"Music seems to me to be in its infancy; but that opinion I have had to keep to myself. All that remains to us of music from the seventeenth century proves that the old composers were ignorant of everything but melody; they knew nothing of harmony and its immense resources. Music is at once a science and an art. It is so rooted in physics and mathematics that it is a science itself; it is an art by inspiration, but it unconsciously employs the principles of science. It is connected with physics by the very essence of the substance upon which it works. In my judgment the nature of sound is identical with that of light. Sound is light in another form; both affect man by vibrations which are carried to the nerve centres and there transformed into thought. Music is akin to painting in that the instruments perform the work of the painter's colors. I tell you that music is a tissue of art extending into the very bowels of nature. Music obeys physical and mathematical laws. Physical laws are little known; mathematical laws are better known; and since their relations have begun to be studied harmony has been created, to which we owe Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Rossini, great men who have certainly produced finer music than their forerunners, whose genius is also incontestable. The old masters merely sang; they did not unite art and science, thus producing the glorious combinations of melody and harmony. Now, if the discovery of the mathematical laws has given us four such great musicians, what will be the result when we discover the physical laws? That which improves science is also a benefit to art. Well, I have studied these questions for long—and I have solved them. Yes," said Gambara, his eyes sparkling with animation, "hitherto man has studied effects rather than causes. When he gets to the bottom of the causes of things music will become the greatest of all the arts. Is it not now the art which goes deepest into the soul? You merely see a picture, you only hear what a poet tells you; music goes far beyond. Does it not shape your thoughts and awaken long-lost memories? What is the effect of one of Rossini's melodies on an audience? To one it reveals a face long dreamed of; to another appears the bank of some stream on which he walked long years ago, again he hears the rustling of the foliage and sees the day-dreams of his youth reflected in the clear water; this woman recalls the thousand feelings which tortured her in some jealous hour; that one thinks of her heart's unsatisfied desires and paints with rich dream-colors an ideal being whom she longs to love. Music has the power to throw us back upon ourselves, while other arts only give clearly defined pleasures.

"But I am wandering. Such were my first thoughts, very vague, for an inventor's first days are always spent in a kind of indefinite idealism. I carried my glorious dreams in the bottom of my knapsack; they sweetened the dry crust that I dipped in the spring. I worked, I composed melodies, and, after playing them on some kind of an instrument, I continued my wanderings over Italy. At last, at the age of twenty-two years, I went to live in Venice, where I enjoyed a little rest for the first time and found myself in a position where I could support myself. There I made the acquaintance of an old Venetian nobleman who was pleased with my ideas and who encouraged me in my researches. He obtained employment for me at the Venice Theatre. My life was inexpensive; my lodging cost little. I occupied an apartment in the Capello Palace, in which the famous Bianca, who afterward became Grandduchess of Tuscany, once lived. I imagined that the glory which was to crown my efforts some day would begin there. I passed my evenings at the theatre and my days at work. But misfortune overtook me. The representation of the opera upon which I spent all my time was a fiasco. They did not understand the music of the 'Martyrs.' Italians do not want the music of Beethoven. No one had the patience to wait for the effect prepared by the different *motifs* played by the several instruments, which were to unite in a grand finale. I had founded all my hopes on the 'Martyrs,' for we devotees of the goddess Hope always discount our success. When one believes himself to be destined to great things it is difficult to wait patiently. Marianna's family lived in that house, and the hope of winning her hand—she often smiled at me from her window—had contributed much to my efforts. I fell into a black melancholy as I sounded the depths of the abyss into which I had fallen, for I saw clearly before me a life of poverty, a continual struggle in which love was sure to perish in the end. But Marianna was a genius; she surmounted every difficulty. I shall not trouble you with the details of the little happiness that brightened the beginning of my misfortunes. Stunned by my failure, I concluded that Italy, dull and sleeping in the stupor of routine, was not ready to accept the innovations which I contemplated. Then I thought of Germany. While travelling through that country, to which I went by way of Hungary, I heard the song of Nature's many voices and I forced myself to reproduce their sublime harmonies with the aid of instruments which I invented for that purpose. These experiments necessitated great expenditures, which soon swallowed up our little savings. But it was a happy time: I was appreciated in Germany. I can look back on those days with pride. I cannot describe the tumultuous emotions which assailed me as I used to contemplate Marianna, whose beauty seemed to me then to be celestial in its glory. Must I say it? Yes, I was happy. During those hours of weakness I more than once expressed my passion in the language of the terrestrial harmonies. I succeeded in composing melodies which resembled geometrical figures. As soon as this was accomplished insurmountable obstacles were placed in my path by my rivals, all inspired by bad faith or stupidity. Then I heard that France was a country in which innovations were favorably received and I determined to go there. My wife managed to scrape together a small sum and we came to Paris. Up to that time no one had laughed at me; but in this hideous city I am suffering new tortures, to which poverty will soon add its bitter pangs. Reduced to living in this low quarter, we have existed for several months on the work done by Marianna, who has been compelled to use her needle in the service of the disreputable people who inhabit this street. Marianna assures me that she has met persons of good and generous instincts among them, but I attribute that to the influence of a virtue so pure that vice itself is obliged to respect it."

"Hope!" said Andrea to him. "It may be that you have reached the end of your struggles. While waiting until my efforts, united with yours, succeed in raising your works to their true place, permit a countryman and an artist like yourself to offer you some small advances on the certain success of your opera."

"Everything which has to do with the material conditions of life is in charge of my wife," replied Gambara; "she will decide whether we can accept money without shame from a man of honor such as you undoubtedly are. As for me, as it is many a long day since I have taken any one so much into my confidence, I ask permission to leave you. I see a melody inviting me; it is flickering and dancing before me like a will-o'-the-wisp of the moors. Adieu!"

He went away like a man who is reproaching himself for having lost precious time, and Marianna, embarrassed, was about to follow him. Andrea had not the courage to attempt to keep her back, but Giardini came to his assistance.

"You have heard, Signorina," said he. "Your husband has left you to arrange a little matter with the Count."

Marianna seated herself again but did not raise her eyes to Andrea, who hesitated before speaking.

"Does not the confidence of Signor Gambara," he said in a trembling voice, "entitle me to that of his wife? Will the beautiful Marianna refuse to give me the story of her life?"

"My life," replied Marianna, "my life is that of the ivy. If you wish to know the history of my heart after the story you have just listened to, you must believe me lacking in both pride and modesty."

"And of whom should I ask it, then?" cried the Count, whose passion had already overcome every other feeling.

"Of yourself," replied Marianna. "Either you understand me already or you never will. Ask it of yourself!"

"I consent, but you will hear me. You will leave this little hand in mine as long as you believe my story to be true."

"I am listening," said Marianna.

"A woman's life begins with her first passion," said Andrea. "My dear Marianna began to live on the day when she saw Paolo Gambara for the first time. She needed love; she needed above all some one to protect and care for. Woman's beautiful nature inclines her rather toward motherhood than love. You sigh, Marianna? I have touched one of the tender spots of your heart. It was a fine role that you assumed—you, so young, to watch over that splendid but erratic intellect. Then, in the first rapture of youth, you heard the thousand voices of nature that the poet yearned to reproduce. You were seized with enthusiasm when Paolo spread out before you those poetic treasures, and you admired him the more when some delirious exaltation carried him above you, for you loved to think that all his artistic energy would finally be turned into the paths of love. You did not know the jealous and tyrannical rule exercised by art over those who worship at its shrine. Gambara had given himself, before he knew you, to the proud and vindictive mistress against whom you have struggled in vain. You were happy but for a moment. Paolo, fallen from the heights where his intellect had been soaring, was astonished to find reality so sweet; you fondly believed that his folly was being sung to sleep by love's lullaby. But music soon recaptured her victim. That glorious mirage only intensified the bitterness of your solitary life. In the story which your husband has just told us, as well as in the striking contrast between you and him, I read the secret sorrows of your life and trials of that unequal union, in which you have borne the greater burden. Though your conduct was always heroic, and though your energy never failed in the performance of painful duties, in the silence of your solitary nights your heart must have cried out more than once! If he had been less noble or less pure you would have abandoned your husband; but his virtues sustained yours. You asked yourself whether your heroism should yield before his. You persevered in the real glory of your trials as Paolo pursued his chimera. If only devotion to duty had sustained and guided you, the victory might have been easier. You only had to stifle the feelings of your heart and transport yourself into the world of abstractions; religion would have absorbed the rest, and you would have lived on an idea, like those saintly women who forget the instincts of nature at the foot of the altar. But the personal charm of your Paolo, the power of his intellect and the rare and touching expressions of his tenderness, always brought you back from the ideal world where virtue was trying to keep you. But you did not lose hope. Its faintest glimmerings called you back to the pursuit of your sweet shadow.

"But the disappointments of so many years have at last made you lose patience—an angel could not have done more. To-day you know that you have been pursuing a phantom and not a reality. A madness which is so closely allied to genius cannot be curable in this world. You thought of your youth which, if not lost, was at least sacrificed; then you bitterly regretted the mistake of nature which had given you a father when you desired a husband. You asked yourself whether you had not exceeded the duties of a wife by giving yourself entirely to this man who lives in his art. Marianna, leave your hand in mine; everything I have said is true. And then you looked about you; but you were in Paris, not in Italy, where love is so sweet. . . ."

"Oh, let me finish the story," cried Marianna, "I prefer to tell you myself. I will be frank; I know now that I am speaking to my best friend. Yes, it was in Paris that I felt all you have explained so clearly; but, when I saw you I knew that I was saved, for I never found the love which I dreamed of in my childhood. My circumstances kept me from the observation of men like yourself. Some young men whose position did not permit of their insulting me became still more odious to me by the light way in which they treated me. Some ridiculed my husband as an old fool, others basely attempted to secure his goodwill in order to betray him; all endeavored to divide us; none understood my devotion to that soul who is so far from us only because he is nearer Heaven, to that friend and brother whom I hope always to serve. You alone have understood the tie which unites us; is it not so? Tell me that your interest in my Paolo is sincere and that you have no other motive. . . ."

"I am grateful for your opinion of me," interrupted Andrea, "but if you go on I shall be forced to contradict you. I love you, Marianna, as they love in that beautiful country in which we were born; I love you with all my heart and all my soul; but, before laying that love at your feet, I wish it to be worthy of yours. I will make a last effort to give you back the man whom you have loved since childhood and whom you will always love. But while awaiting success or failure, accept without embarrassment the assistance which I wish to give both of you; to-morrow we shall go together to choose a lodging for your husband. Do you think enough of me to allow me to share your care of him?"

Marianna, astonished at such generosity, held out her hand to the Count, who took his departure, amid the profuse civilities of Signor Giardini and his wife.

The next day the Count was taken by Giardini to the composer's apartment. Though her lover's excellent heart was well known to her, Marianna was too good a housekeeper not to feel a little embarrassment at receiving so distinguished a visitor in such a shabby room. But everything was perfectly clean. She had spent the whole morning dusting and polishing her rather curious furniture, the work of Giardini, who, at odd moments, had constructed it out of the remains of Gambara's cast-off musical instruments. Andrea had never seen anything so strange. He had difficulty in keeping a straight face when he saw the musician's bed which the cook had made out of an old harpsichord. He was about to speak of his projects and how they would spend the day, but the enthusiastic Gambara, believing that he had at last found a benevolent listener, buttonholed him and obliged him to listen to the opera which he had written for the benefit of the Parisians.

"In the first place," said Gambara, "I shall outline the work in a few words. Here, men who receive musical impressions do not develop them within themselves, as religion teaches us to supplement the Gospel by prayer. It is, therefore, difficult to make them understand that there exists in nature an eternal music—a sweet melody and perfect harmony—which is only interrupted by movements independent of the Divine Will, just as passions are independent of the will of man. I must find, therefore, a frame large enough to hold both cause and effect, for the aim of my music is to present a picture of life and nations taken from the highest point of view. My opera, the libretto of which has been written by myself—for a poet could not have worked up the subject—embraces the life of Mahomet, a character in which the magic of the ancient fire worshippers and the Oriental poetry of the Jewish religion have united to produce one of the greatest human poems, the Arabian dominion. Mahomet certainly borrowed from the Jews the idea of absolute government and from the fire worshippers the spirit of progress which created the mighty empire of the Caliphs. His destiny was written in his birth;

his father was a pagan and his mother a Jew. Ah! to be a great musician, Count, it is necessary to have studied much. Without knowledge or local color there can be no ideas in music. The composer who sings only for the sake of singing is an artisan but not an artist. This magnificent opera is but a part of the great work which I contemplate. My first opera was called the 'Martyrs,' and I shall compose a third entitled 'Jerusalem Delivered.' You perceive the beauty of this trilogy and its immense resources: the 'Martyrs,' 'Mahomet,' 'Jerusalem!' The Gods of the East and West and the struggle of their worshippers around a tomb. But we will not speak of my fame, now lost forever! This is the argument of my opera.

"In the first act," said he after a pause, "Mahomet is discovered in the service of Kadijah, a rich widow, with whom Mahomet's uncle has placed him. He is ambitious and in love. Banished from Mecca, he escapes to Medina. The second act shows Mahomet the Prophet preaching his religion of war. The third presents Mahomet disgusted with the world, having exhausted his life, and shrouding his death in mystery in order to be thought a god—the last effort of human pride. You may now judge of my manner of expressing in sound a great idea which poetry could render but imperfectly in words."

Gambara seated himself at the piano in an abstracted manner, and his wife gave him the voluminous score, which he did not open.

"The whole opera," said he, "rests on the bass as its foundation. Mahomet should have a majestic bass voice, and his wife should necessarily have a contralto. Kadijah is twenty years of age—old for that time. Listen, this is the overture: it begins with an andante in C minor, triple time. Do you not hear the sighs of the ambitious man who is not satisfied with love? Yet, in spite of these plaints, by a transition to E flat, allegro, common time, we hear the cries of the warlike lover, for the all-powerful cimeter of the Caliphs begins to flash before his eyes. The beauties of his wife give him that feeling of universal love which so strikes us in 'Don Giovanni.' As you listen to these strains, can you not see the Paradise of Mahomet? But here we have a cantabile (A flat major, six-eight time) capable of ravishing the rudest soul; Kadijah has understood Mahomet! She announces to the people the Prophet's interviews with the Angel Gabriel (*Maestoso sostenuto* in F minor). Magistrates, priests, principalities and religions, feeling themselves attacked by the reformer, drive Mahomet out of Mecca (*stretto* in C major). Then comes my fine dominant in G major, common time. Arabia hears the voice of her Prophet; horsemen arrive (G major, E minor, B flat, G minor! still common time). The avalanche of men grows apace! Mahomet promises the Arabs universal dominion; they believe him to be inspired. The crescendo begins on the same dominant. Medina is conquered and the Prophet marches on Mecca (avalanche of sound in C major). The powers of the orchestra are developed like a conflagration; every instrument is used; it is a flood of harmony.

"All at once the ear is struck by an exquisite air (in a minor third) which singles itself out of the *tutti*. Listen to the last breath of a devoted love! The woman who has been so much to the great man dies hiding from him her despair; her death occurs at the moment of the triumph of him in whom love has grown too vast to be satisfied with one woman; she adores him enough to sacrifice herself to his greatness.

"Now the Desert is rising to conquer the World (back to C major). The whole strength of the orchestra returns, and is resumed in a magnificent quintet, founded on the bass, who is dying. Mahomet is weary of life; he wishes to die a god! Arabia worships him and prays, and we fall back to my first melancholy strain (C minor) to which the curtain rose.

"Do you not find," said Gambara, ceasing to play and turning toward the Count, "in this music, which is spirited, violent and sad, but always grand, the expression of the life of that epileptic thirsting for pleasure, unable to read or write, making his every fault a stepping-stone to his greatness and turning his misfortunes into triumphs? Have you any idea of the power to be exercised upon an eager and sympathetic audience by this overture, which contains the spirit of the opera?"

At first calm and severe, Gambara's features, in which Andrea had tried to read the ideas which the confused medley of sounds did not permit him to distinguish, gradually became animated and assumed a passionate expression, which was reflected on the faces of Marianna and the cook. Marianna was so much affected by the passages, in which she recognized her own fate, that she could not conceal her emotion from Andrea. Gambara wiped his brow and gazed fiercely heavenward.

"You have seen the vestibule," said he, "now we will enter the palace. The opera begins. First Act. Mahomet, alone on the stage, sings an air in F natural, common time, which is interrupted by a chorus of camel-drivers who gather around a well at the back of the stage. What majestic sorrow! It would affect the most heartless of women. Is there not genius in that melody?"

To the great surprise of Andrea—Marianna was accustomed to it—Gambara contracted his larynx so violently that the sounds which came from his throat were more like the barking of a dog than the human voice. The light froth which appeared on the composer's lips made Andrea shudder.

"His wife arrives (A minor). What a magnificent duet! Kadijah announces that she is about to devote herself to a work which will rob her of her young husband's love. Mahomet wishes to conquer the world; his wife has guessed this, and aids him by persuading the populace of Mecca that her husband's attacks of epilepsy are the effect of his intercourse with angels. Chorus of Mahomet's first disciples who have come to promise him their aid (C sharp minor, sotto voce). Mahomet leaves in quest of the Angel Gabriel (recitative in F major). His wife encourages the chorus (aria with chorus—voices in background support the rich and majestic song of Kadijah, A major). Aboubecker, the father of Ayesha, a maiden beloved by Mahomet, advances with her from the chorus (by phrases which rise above the rest of the voices and support Kadijah's air, joining it in counterpoint). Omar, father of Hafsa, another maiden to be given to Mahomet, follows Aboubecker's example, and comes forward with his daughter; together they form a quintet; Ayesha is first soprano, Hafsa second soprano, Aboubecker is bass, and Omar baritone. Mahomet suddenly reappears inspired. He sings his first bravura, which commences the finale (E major). He promises the empire of the world to his first believers. The Prophet sees the two maidens, and, in a gentle transition from B major to G major, he addresses them in tones of love. Ali, Mahomet's cousin, and Khaled, his greatest general, arrive and announce that they are to be persecuted by the authorities. The Prophet has been outlawed (recitative). Mahomet cries out (C major) that the Angel Gabriel is with him, and points to a flying dove. The Chorus of Believers answers in accents of devotion (on a modulation in B major). Warriors, magistrates and lords arrive (march time in B major). Fight between the two choruses (stretto in E major). Mahomet (in a succession of diminished sevenths) flies.

"The terribly sombre hue of this finale is relieved by the arias of the three women, who foretell Mahomet's triumph; these motifs are developed in the third act, in the scene where Mahomet enjoys the fruits of his fame."

At that moment Gambara's eyes filled with tears, and after a short silence he cried out—

"Second Act!

"Here the religion is established. The Arabs are guarding the tent of their Prophet, who is communing with God (chorus in A minor). Mahomet appears (prayer in F). What a brilliant and majestic melody is contained in this song, in which I have perhaps touched the limits of melody! How can one express the marvels of that great movement of men which created a music, an architecture and a poetry? In the meantime you are walking under the arcades of the Generalife and through the sculptured halls of the Alhambra! The delicate trills of the melody express the delicious Moorish architecture and the poetic beauties of that gallant and warlike religion which was to war against Christian chivalry. Brass instruments awaken the orchestra and announce the first triumphs (in a broken cadenza). The Arabs are worshipping the Prophet (E flat major). Khaled, Amrou and Ali arrive (in march time). The armies of the Believers have taken many cities and conquered the three

Arabias! What an imposing recitative! Mahomet rewards his generals by presenting them with maidens. (Here," said he, piteously, "is one of those ignoble ballets which interrupt the thread of the finest musical tragedies! But Mahomet (B minor) elevates the opera by his great prophecy, which begins with poor Voltaire's line—

> " 'Arabia's time at last is come.'

It is interrupted by a chorus of triumphant Arabs (twelve-eight quick time). The brass and wood wind instruments bring the tribes together. There is a general festival in which all the voices are brought in, one after another. In the midst of this banquet the woman who has served Mahomet so long sings a magnificent aria in B major. 'And I,' she says, 'am I no longer loved?' 'We must part; thou art but a woman, and I am a Prophet; I may have slaves, but I cannot have an equal!' Listen to this duet (G sharp minor). The woman understands the greatness to which she has raised him, but she loves Mahomet well enough to sacrifice herself to his fame; she worships him as a god, without judging him or murmuring. Poor woman! his first dupe and his first victim. What a subject for the finale (B major) is that sorrow painted in such dark colors against the background of the cheering chorus and mingled with the accents of Mahomet, who is abandoning his wife as he would cast away a tool for which he had no more use, but pretending that he will never forget her! What a triumphant carol there is in the voices of Ayesha and Hafsa, supported by Ali and his wife, Omar and Aboubecker! Weeping and rejoicing! Triumphs and tears! Such is life."

Marianna could no longer keep back her tears. Andrea was so affected that his eyes filled. The Neapolitan cook, who felt the magnetism of the ideas expressed by Gambara's inspired voice, was also moved. The musician turned in his chair, saw the group and smiled.

"You understand me at last!" cried he.

A hero carried in triumph to the Capitol in the purple of his fame and amid the acclamations of the populace could not have worn a more beatific expression. The musician's face shone like that of a holy martyr. No one broke the spell. A terrible smile hovered about Marianna's lips. The Count was horror-stricken at the artlessness of the composer's madness.

"Third Act!" said the happy Gambara, seating himself again at the piano, "(andantino solo). Mahomet, unhappy in his harem, surrounded by women. Chorus of houris (in A major). What pomp! What strains of happy nightingales! (modulations in F sharp minor). The subject is presented in the dominant E and then returns to A major. The women group themselves so as to produce a contrary effect to the gloomy finale of the first act. After the dances Mahomet rises and sings a fine bravura (F minor), in which he regrets the devoted love of his first wife. Never had a musician such a subject. The orchestra and the chorus of women portray the pleasures of the harem while Mahomet returns to the melancholy motif which opened the opera.

"Where is Beethoven?" cried Gambara, "that I may be worthily appreciated in this prodigious return of the opera upon itself. It still rests on the bass! Thus it was that Beethoven composed his Symphony in C. But his heroic movement is purely instrumental, while here my heroic movement is supported by a chorus of Believers, who watch at the gate of the holy house. I have all the riches of melody and harmony, of orchestra and voice! You may hear the expression of all human life, rich or poor; battle, triumph, weariness. Ali arrives. The Koran triumphs at every point (duet in D minor). Mahomet confides to his two fathers-in-law that he is tired of everything; he wishes to abdicate and die unknown in order to complete his life work. Magnificent sextet (B flat major). He says farewell (solo in F natural). His two fathers-in-law, his Caliphs, assemble the people. Grand triumphal march. The Arabs all fall on their knees and pray before the holy house (Kasha) whence the dove has flown. The prayer, which is made up of sixty voices and led by the women (B flat), crowns this tremendous work, in which the life of man and nations is portrayed, and which runs the gamut of all emotion, human and divine."

Andrea looked at Gambara in amazement. If he had not at first been struck by the terrible irony of the man's expressing the feelings of Mahomet's wife without recognizing them in his own, he would have thought the madness of the husband eclipsed by that of the composer. There had been no approach to poetry or music in Gambara's hideous discords. The very rudiments of harmony were defied in his grotesque composition. In place of the music so poetically outlined by Gambara, it was nothing but a succession of fifths, sevenths and octaves, major thirds and fourths without the necessary bass—a jumble of discordant sounds thrown out at random, as though the only object was to torture the ear. New words would be necessary to describe such impossible music. Painfully affected by the good man's madness, Andrea colored and looked furtively at Marianna, who, pale and with downcast eyes, could not keep back her tears. In the midst of his infernal clatter, Gambara had given vent from time to time to ejaculations which betrayed the ecstasy of his mind; he was beside himself with joy; he smiled, frowned and put out his tongue at his piano; he seemed quite intoxicated with the poetry which filled his brain and which he was vainly trying to interpret. The horrible discords he brought out of the piano were evidently celestial harmonies to him. Certainly a deaf person, on seeing the far-away look in the composer's eyes, his flushed cheeks and the ecstasy written in every feature, would have believed he was witnessing the performance of some great artist. And this illusion would have been strengthened by the marvellous technique displayed. Gambara must have practiced for years to have reached such dexterity. Not only were his hands occupied, but the working of the pedals kept his whole body continually moving. A light perspiration broke out on his face as he tried to develop a crescendo out of the limited capacities of the instrument; he yelled, snorted and gasped; his fingers performed podigies of agility. Finally, at the last crash of the piano he threw himself back in his chair exhausted.

"By Bacchus! my brain reels!" cried the Count as he left the room. "A child dancing on the keyboard would have produced better music."

"It would seem as though chance might have managed a single true chord out of all the noise which that devil of a man has been making for the last hour," said Giardini.

"How can Marianna keep her beauty under the strain of hearing those frightful discords every day?" said the Count. "She is threatened with ugliness."

"My lord, we must prevent that," cried Giardini.

"Yes," said Andrea, "I had thought of that. But, in order to make sure that my scheme does not rest upon a false foundation, I must prove my suspicions by an experiment. I shall return and examine the instruments which he has invented. So to-morrow evening we will have a little supper here; I shall see that the necessary wine and other refreshments are sent up."

The cook bowed.

The following day was employed by the Count in arranging the apartment which he had selected for the artist and his wife. In the evening Andrea returned to the Rue Froidmanteau and found the wines and cakes he had ordered served by Marianna and the cook on a little table. Gambara showed him triumphantly some little drums upon which he was experimenting with grains of sand, grouping them into different shapes by sounds produced from his instruments.

"See," said he, "by what simple means I can prove a great theory. The law of acoustics reveals to me in this way the actions produced by sound upon everything which it effects. Harmony can be separated into its component parts as a ray of light is dissected by a prism."

Then he exhibited instruments constructed according to his ideas, explaining the changes he had introduced in their forms. Finally he announced with some emphasis that he would conclude his little lecture by performing on an instrument which was destined to take the place of a complete orchestra and which he called a *panharmonicon.*

"If that is the instrument which brings the neighbors down on us with complaints whenever you play on it," said Giardini, "you had better not perform upon it for long, or the police will be making us a visit."

"If that poor fool remains," said Gambara in the Count's ear, "it will be impossible for me to play."

The Count sent the cook away, promising him a reward if he could manage to prevent the police or the neighbors from interfering. The cook, who had not been sparing of Gambara's toasts, consented.

Without being intoxicated, the composer was in that state of mind when the intellectual powers are excited; when the walls of a room become luminous, when attics no longer have roofs and when the soul soars into the realm of spirits. Marianna, with some trouble, disengaged from its covering an instrument rather larger than a grand piano. This strange instrument had the appearance of an organ with the addition of the upper parts of various brass instruments.

"Will you be good enough to play that prayer which you say is so beautiful and which finishes your opera," said the Count.

To the great astonishment of Marianna and Andrea, Gambara began with several chords which betrayed the touch of a master; their surprise was succeeded by admiration and then by an ecstasy in which they forgot the performer and his surroundings. An orchestra could not have produced a grander effect than those wind instruments, which reminded one somewhat of the organ but which combined marvellously with the rich harmonies of the strings; but the unfinished state of the instrument limited the composer's work. The purest and sweetest music that Andrea had ever heard rose from Gambara's touch like incense from an altar. His voice became young again, and, far from marring the rich melody, it supplemented it, strengthened and directed it, like the voice of a reader such as Andrieux would intensify a sublime scene in Corneille or Racine by adding to it poetic feeling. That heavenly music gave an indication of the treasures hidden in the tremendous opera, which, however, could never be appreciated while the composer persisted in rendering it in his unsound state of mind.

The Count and Marianna, a prey to mingled pleasure and surprise caused by that instrument of a hundred voices, in which a stranger might have imagined that the maker had concealed a chorus of young girls, so like the human voice were many of its tones, dared not communicate their thoughts either by word or look. Marianna's face was lighted up by a glorious ray of hope which gave her back all the beauties of her youth.

"You are our good genius," Marianna said to the Count, "I am almost tempted to believe that you are his inspiration, because I, who never leave him, have never heard anything like that music."

"Kadijah's farewell!" cried Gambara, who began to sing the cavatina which he had called sublime the evening before, and which now expressed the highest devotion of human love so beautifully that it brought tears to the eyes of the two lovers.

"Who inspired you to compose such songs?" asked the Count.

"My genius," replied Gambara, "when it appears everything seems to be on fire. I see melodies face to face, beautiful and fresh, with the colors of the rainbow; they shine and sparkle as I listen to them, but it takes an infinity of time to reproduce them."

"Sing it again," said Marianna.

Gambara, who felt no fatigue, played without effort or grimaces. He executed his overture with such great skill, and brought in such novel musical effects, that the Count, astonished, could hardly help believing that he saw before him a magic as great as that employed by Paganini and Liszt, which revolutionizes the whole theory of music.

"Well! will your Excellency be able to cure him?" asked the cook when Andrea had descended.

"I shall soon know how," replied the Count. "That man's intellect has two windows; one closed to the world, the other open to heaven: the first is music, the second is poetry. Until to-day he has insisted upon remaining before the closed window; he must be led to the other. You were the first to put me on the scent, Giardini, by telling me that your guest was more rational after drinking several glasses of wine."

"Yes," cried the cook, "and I can guess your Excellency's plan."

"If there is yet time to make poetry sound true to his ear, in the midst of some beautiful music, we must put him in a state in which he can hear and judge. Will you help me to get Gambara intoxicated, my good man? Can you do it without harm to yourself?"

"What does your Excellency mean?"

Andrea went away without replying, but laughing at the perspicacity sometimes displayed by the greatest fools. The next day he returned for Marianna, who had spent the morning on a simple but tasteful toilet on which she had spent the last of her savings. The change in her appearance would have dispelled the illusion in many a man, but the Count's whim had become a passion. Stripped of her poetic poverty and transformed into a simple middle-class young woman, Marianna brought the subject of marriage to his mind. He assisted her into a cab and told her of his scheme. She consented to everything, only too happy to find her lover more generous and disinterested even than she had hoped. They soon arrived at the apartment, in which Andrea had scattered about in profusion those dainty knick-knacks which please all women and which he fondly hoped might serve to sometimes remind Marianna of him.

"I shall not speak of my love for you until you have quite despaired of your Paolo," said the Count to Marianna as they returned to the Rue Froidmanteau. "You shall be a witness of the sincerity of my efforts; if they are successful I shall always remain your friend, but I shall have to leave you, Marianna. I can work for your happiness, but I have not the strength to watch it."

"Please do not talk in that way; generosity has its dangers, too," she replied, trying hard not to cry. "But surely you are not going to leave me already?"

"Yes," said Andrea, "you will be happier without me."

If the cook might be believed, the change in their mode of living was a benefit to the artist and his wife. Every evening after dinner Gambara seemed less absorbed. He was more communicative and more rational. Finally he spoke of reading the newspapers. Andrea could not repress a shudder when he heard of the rapidity of the cure; but, although the pain he felt revealed to him the strength of his love, he did not waver in his good resolutions.

One day he went to see for himself what progress was being made. Though the state of his patient at first caused him some pleasure, he was disturbed by Marianna's beauty, to which the ease and comfort of the last few days had given back all its freshness. Then he began to visit them every evening; he conversed with the composer on both trivial and serious topics, always seeking to introduce carefully prepared arguments against Gambara's strange theories. All went well while the fumes of the wine heated the invalid's brain; but, as soon as they were dissipated, he fell back into his mania. Nevertheless, Paolo was more easily distracted by material things, and his intellect was able to grasp several subjects at once. Andrea, who took an artist's interest in that semi-medical work, finally made what he considered to be a fine coup. He decided to invite Giardini and Gambara to his apartments to dinner, and for the sake of uniting tragedy and parody he arranged it for the day of the first representation of the opera "Robert the Devil." He had attended one of the rehearsals of that opera, and it seemed to him to be a work suitable to open the eyes of his patient.

After the second course Gambara, already intoxicated, took part in the jokes at his own expense with an excellent grace, and Giardini confessed that his culinary innovations were not worth a *baioccho*. For the accomplishment of this twofold miracle Andrea had left nothing undone. The wines of Orvieto and Montefiascone, Lachrymachristi and Giro were there. The fumes of all the finest wines of *la cara patria* filled the brains of his guests with the double intoxication of wine and memory. By the time dessert had been served both the musician and the cook gayly abjured their errors; the one hummed one of Rossini's cavatinas, the other heaped up his plate with viands which he washed down with maraschino from Zara to the health of French cookery.

The Count took advantage of Gambara's happy state to take him off to the theatre, to which he consented with the meekness of a lamb. At the first notes of the overture Gambara's intoxication seemed to disappear and give place to the feverish excitement which sometimes had the effect of harmonizing his reason and imagination, whose habitual discord was undoubtedly the cause of his madness, and the central idea of the great musical drama appeared to him in all its striking simplicity like a lightning-flash across the black night in which he existed. To his new-found sense this music opened up to him immense vistas of a world in which he found himself for the first time, remembering the incidents of his past life as in a dream. He thought himself transported to the green fields of his native land, that northern portion of Italy which Napoleon so happily termed the slope of the Alps. Carried back by his memory to the time when his young and brilliant intellect was undisturbed by the extravagances of his too rich imagination, he listened to the music quite absorbed. And the Count respected the forces at work in his mind. Until long after midnight Gambara remained so motionless that the people about him must have taken him for what he really was, a drunken man.

On the way home Andrea began to attack Meyerbeer's work in order to rouse Gambara, who was still plunged in one of those stupors which wine-bibbers know so well.

"What magnetism is there in that incoherent score which puts you into the state of a sleep-walker?" asked Andrea when they had arrived at his lodgings. "The story of 'Robert the Devil' undoubtedly has elements of interest. Holtei worked it up very happily in his drama, which is well written and full of powerful and striking situations; but the French writers have made a ridiculous fable of it. Not even the absurdity of the libretti of Vesari or Schikaneder equals that of the words of 'Robert the Devil,' a dramatic nightmare which depresses the audience in a vain attempt to produce an effect. Meyerbeer has made a very good character of the Devil. Bertram and Alice represent the struggle between good and evil. This conflict gives a nice contrast to the composer. The placing of the sweetest melodies side by side with harsh and soulless songs was a natural consequence of the form of the libretto, but in the score of the German composer the demons sing better than the saints. The celestial melodies often belie their origin, and if the composer occasionally leaves the infernal motives he is quick to return, fatigued by his effort to keep away from them. The melody, a golden thread which should never be broken in such a great composition, often disappears in Meyerbeer's work. Feeling is altogether absent; the heart plays no part, so that the ear is never charmed by those happy and artless songs which awaken every sympathy and leave in the soul an impression of sweetness. Harmony reigns supreme instead of being merely the background for the various groups of the musical picture. Those clanging chords, far from moving the audience, only give them a feeling such as they would experience on seeing an acrobat hanging on a rope and swinging between life and death. The tired ear is never soothed by gentle melodies. One might say that the composer had no other purpose than that of being weird and fantastic; he seeks with avidity the opportunity to work in an uncouth effect, without troubling himself about truth, musical unity or the capacity of the voices, which are buried under the orchestral alavanche."

"Stop, my friend," said Gambara; "I am still under the charm of that admirable Hell chorus which the speaking-tubes—a novel method of instrumentation—made still more effective! The broken cadenzas which give so much force to Robert's song, the cavatina in the fourth act and the finale of the first—all hold me by their fascination as though by some supernatural power! No, the declamation of Gluck himself never had such a prodigious effect, and I am amazed at such skill."

"Signor Maestro," said Andrea, smiling, "Gluck thought a great deal before he wrote. He calculated all the chances and constructed a plan which might be modified later by any inspirations that might strike him, but which kept him from going astray. Hence that forcible accentuation, that declamation palpitating with truth. I agree with you that the science is great in Meyerbeer's opera, but science becomes a fault when it is separated from inspiration. I think I can see in that opera the painstaking work of a fine intellect which has built up its music from the remains of thousands of operas which have failed or been forgotten. But, like all collectors of scraps, he has been overtaken by the fault of abusing a good thing. This clever note collector is so lavish of discords that they jar on the ear, and so unsparing of powerful situations—which a composer should use with the greatest care—that they lose their force. Those inharmonic transitions are repeated to satiety and the abuse of the cadenza plagale detracts from its sentiment. I know very well that every composer has his own particular style to which he returns in spite of himself, but it is essential that he keep close watch on himself and try to remedy the defect. A picture made up entirely of blue or red coloring would be far from the truth and would fatigue the eye. And in the same way the rhythm in the score of 'Robert,' which is almost always the same, throws monotony over the whole work. As to the effect of the speaking-tube which you mention, it has been in use for some time in Germany, and what Meyerbeer gives us as new was always employed by Mozart, who made the Chorus of Devils in 'Don Giovanni' sing in that way."

Andrea tried, continually plying Gambara with wine, to lead him by his contradictions round to a true musical standpoint. He endeavored to prove to him that his mission in the world did not consist in regenerating an art by exceeding the limits of that art, but that he should seek an expression to his ideas in some other form, such as poetry.

"You have not understood, my dear Count, that stupendous musical drama," said Gambara nonchalantly, as, standing by Andrea's piano, he struck a few notes and listened to their tone; then he seated himself before it and was silent for a moment as if to collect his thoughts.

"First of all you must know," he continued, "that my cultivated ear recognized the resetting of which you speak. But that music was selected with a loving hand from the treasures of a rich and fruitful imagination upon which science has impressed ideas only to extract from them the essence of music. Let me explain."

He rose and placed the candles in the next room; then, before sitting down again at the piano, he drank a full glass of Giro, a Sardinian wine as fiery as the old vintages of Tokay.

"That great drama lacks little to make it equal to Mozart's 'Don Giovanni.' 'Don Giovanni' is more perfect in construction, I grant you; 'Robert the Devil' represents ideas, while 'Don Giovanni' excites emotions. 'Don Giovanni' is still the only musical work in which harmony and melody are presented in their just proportions. In that particular alone is 'Don Giovanni' superior to 'Robert,' for

'Robert' is richer in ideas. But what is the use of this comparison? Each work is beautiful in its own way. I am still shuddering from the repeated shocks of the Devil. 'Robert' has spoken to me more forcibly than to you, and I have found him both vast and concentrated. Certainly thanks are due to you that I am existing in this beautiful dream-land in which the senses are magnified and the universe assumes gigantic proportions."

He was silent for a moment.

"I am trembling still," he went on, "at the four bars of kettledrums which pierced me to the bone and which opened that short, brusk overture in which the trombone solo, the flutes, oboes and clarinets produced such a vivid effect. That andante in C minor foretells the invocation of the spirits in the Abbey and intensifies the scene by the announcement of the spiritual conflict. I shivered!"

Gambara struck the keys with a firm hand; he played Meyerbeer's theme in a sort of outpouring of the soul, after the manner of Liszt. It was a piano no longer, it was a whole orchestra—the awakening of the Spirit of Music.

"There you have Mozart's style," he cried. "How that German manages harmony, and by what skilful modulations he carries the terror motif to the dominant C! I hear the music of the Inferno! The curtain rises, and what do I see? The only scene which is called infernal, the orgy of the knights in Sicily. This chorus in F unloosens every human passion in its bacchanalian allegro. Every chain by which the Devil leads us rattles! That is the kind of joy which seizes men and makes them dance on the brink of the abyss until they become giddy and fall over. What movement there is in that chorus! Then what a contrast is Raimbaut's song in G minor, full of the simple and artless life of the countryman. It was refreshing to hear that good man singing of the green and rich fields of Normandy—recalling them to Robert in the midst of his debauch. Thus, the sweetness of a beloved fatherland runs through that gloomy scene like a silver thread. Then comes that wonderful ballad in C major, accompanied by the chorus in C minor, and which expresses the subject so well. 'I am Robert!' bursts out immediately. The fury of the prince insulted by his vassal is a natural indignation, but it is soothed, for the memories of childhood come to him with Alice in that allegro in A major, which is full of graceful movement. Do you hear the cries of innocence entering that infernal drama—persecuted?—No! No!" sang Gambara, who could make his piano sing. "The country and its freshness have come! Childhood and its recollections have softened Robert's heart; but here the mother's spirit appears, bringing holy thoughts in its train! Religion animates that beautiful romance in E major, in which there is a marvellous harmonic and melodic progression on the words—

" 'For in Heaven as on earth
His mother prays for him.'

"The struggle begins between the hidden powers and the only man who has in his veins the fire of Hell to resist them. That you may better understand it, I will play you Bertram's entrance, in which the great composer has given a suggestion of Raimbaut's ballad. What art! What union of all its parts; what power of construction! The Devil is skipping about behind it. The combat of the two powers takes place around the terror of Alice. The musical subject unfolds itself, and in what varied phases! The antagonism necessary to every opera is strongly outlined in a fine recitative in the manner of Gluck, between Bertram and Robert.

" 'Thou wilt never know the depths of my love.'

"That diabolical C major—that terrible bass of Bertram's—opens the duel which is to destroy the hot-tempered man. Here I am all excitement. Will justice be appeased? Will the hangman have his victim? Will some misfortune destroy the genius of the artist? Will the guardian angel protect the Christian? Then the finale, the gaming scene, in which Bertram tortures his son, calling up in him the most terrible feelings. Robert, furious, murder in his heart, thirsting to turn everything into blood and fire, is still the son of Bertram. What hideous mirth in Bertram's 'I laugh at your thrusts!' The finale glides along like a Venetian gondola! What daring transitions are those in which the dastardly father persuades his son to play? That opening is startling to those who follow the composer's meaning in their minds. Nothing is wanting in that grand symphony, in which there is no suggestion of monotony.

"I breathe freely; I have reached the invigorating atmosphere of a gallant court; I hear Isabel's sweetly melancholy air and the two-part chorus of women, which has a savor of the Moorish tints of Spain. At this point the terrible music gradually softens like the passing of a storm, until it reaches that graceful and airy duet which is unlike anything in the music preceding it. Following the tumult of the camp comes the picture of love. Thanks, poet! My heart could not have resisted much longer. If I had not rested in the gardens of French comic-opera; if I had not listened to the gentle melodies of loving womankind, I could not have suffered the terrible bass note which announces Bertram's appearance before his son with the words: 'If I permit it!' when Robert promises his adored princess to carry the arms which she has given him to victory. To the hope of the gamester reformed by love—by love of the fairest of women, for did you not see that ravishing Sicilian with her falcon eye fixed on her prey? (what interpreters the composer has found!)—to the hope of this man, Hell interposes its own in that terrible cry: 'Look to thyself, Robert of Normandy!'

"Did you not admire the deep and gloomy horror contained in those long and beautiful notes of the song: 'In the wood near by'? There you may find all the charms of 'Jerusalem Delivered,' as all Christian chivalry is found in that chorus in the Spanish movement and in the tempo di marcia. What originality there is in that allegro (modulations of the four kettledrums, C D C G)! How graceful is that summons to the tournament! The heroic life of the period is there in its entirety; the mind is carried back to the Middle Ages. I read a romance of chivalry. The exposition is finished. It seems as though every musical resource had been exhausted; you have never heard its like, and yet it is all within the subject. You have seen human life in its all-important phase: 'Shall I be happy or unhappy?' asks the philosopher. 'Shall I be damned or saved?' asks the Christian."

Here Gambara paused on the last note of the chorus. He rose to get himself another glass of Giro. That semi-African liquor revived the color in his face, which his passionate and marvellous execution of Meyerbeer's opera had slightly paled.

"That nothing might be lacking in this composition," he continued, "the great artist has given the only light music possible to the Devil, in the seduction of the poor troubadour. He has placed laughter on the side of terror; a jest swallows up the only bit of reality which appears in the sublime idealism of his work. The pure and tranquil loves of Alice and Raimbaut are to be troubled by a foreseen vengeance. Great souls alone can feel the loftiness of sentiment which animates those carolling airs; you will find in them neither the flourishes which are all too common in our Italian music nor the vulgarity of the French. They have something of Olympic majesty. There is the mocking laugh of the Devil contrasted with the surprise of the troubadour. Without this grandeur you could not have suffered the fury of those diminished sevenths which lead into an infernal waltz and bring us face to face with the demons. How clearly Bertram's couplet rises above the Chorus of Hell, mingling the feelings of a father with that infernal music! What a charming change is Alice's arrival on the phrase in B flat! I can still hear those angelic strains. Is it not the nightingale after the storm? The great ruling idea is thus reflected in every detail, for what could be contrasted to that devilish din if not Alice's wonderful song?

"The golden thread of the melody runs through the powerful harmony like a celestial hope; it embroiders it, and with what skill! Never does genius betray the science which guides it. Here Alice sings in B flat, changing to F sharp, the dominant of the infernal chorus. Do you hear the tremolo of the orchestra? Robert is called for by the congregation of devils. Bertram returns on the scene. Here is the culminating point of the musical interest—a recitative comparable to the finest compositions of the greatest masters, the desperate combat in E flat between the two gladiators Heaven and Hell; the one's 'Yes, thou knowest me!' on a diminished seventh; the other's sublime F: 'Heaven is on my side.' Hell and the Cross are face to face. Then come Bertram's menaces to Alice, the most violently pathetic ever written. The Spirit of Evil shows himself with complaisance, and, as usual, he is on the lookout for his own interests. Robert's arrival, which gives us the magnificent trio in A flat without accompaniment, brings about the first struggle between the two rival powers and the man.

"Hear how splendidly it is produced," said Gambara, playing with a passionate execution which fascinated Andrea. "All that musical avalanche, ever since the common time of the kettledrums, has been rolling toward this three-voice combat. The Spirit of Evil triumphs! Alice flies, and you hear the duet in D between Bertram and Robert; the Devil fixes his claws in his heart; the man has been through everything: honor, hope, eternal and infinite joy—all have shone before his eyes. The Devil dares him to the game of courage and all the fine feelings of the man come to the surface in the cry—

" 'Knights of my fatherland,
Honor has ever sustained you!'

"Finally the work is crowned by the fatally significant theme which opened it.

"Gloriously worked out, the subject is gloriously finished by the allegro vivace of the bacchanalian chorus in D minor. This is surely the triumph of Hell! Roll on, music! Wrap us in thine encircling folds! Roll on, and charm us! The infernal powers have seized their prey; they dance around him. That fine genius born to conquer and rule is lost!

The devils rejoice. Misery must smother genius, passion will destroy the knight!"

Here Gambara played the bacchanalian chorus in a manner of his own, improvising ingenious variations and accompanying them in a musical voice, as if to express his many sufferings.

"Do you hear the beautiful lamentation of deserted love?" said he. "Isabel calls Robert in the midst of the great chorus of knights going to the tournament, in which are resumed the motifs of the second act in order to make it well understood that the third act has been played in supernatural surroundings. Real life is with us again. The chorus awakens at the approach of the hellish enchantments which Robert brings with the talisman; the sorcery of the third act is to be repeated. Here comes the violent duet in which the rhythm accentuates the brutal desires of a man who is capable of everything and in which the princess plaintively tries to call back her lover to reason. Here the musician was placed in a difficult position, but he has extricated himself with glory by the most delicious bit in the whole opera. What an adorable melody there is in the cavatina: 'Pardon for thee!' That song alone would make the fortune of the opera, for every woman in the audience felt herself engaged in a struggle with some fierce knight. Never was music so passionate or so dramatic.

"The whole world is now up in arms against the tyrant. This finale might be criticised for its resemblance to that of 'Don Giovanni,' but there is this enormous difference: Isabel's faith, and the fact that it is true love which will save Robert, for he scornfully rejects the infernal power which is given to him, while 'Don Giovanni' persists in his scepticism. Moreover, this criticism is made against all composers who have written finales since Mozart. The finale in 'Don Giovanni' is one of those classical productions which will live forever.

"At last religion rises victor in the struggle; its voice rules the world; it invites all sorrow to come for consolation, and all sinners for repentance. The entire hall resounds with the chorus.

"In the horrible tumult of unchained passions the Holy Voice might not have been heard; but at that critical moment the Divine Catholic Church rises and thunders. Here, after so many treasures of harmony, I was surprised to find the new note struck by the composer in his 'Glory to Providence,' written in Handel's style. Robert arrives, lost, piercing the soul with his 'If I could only pray!' . . . Driven by hell's command, Bertram pursues his son in a last effort. Alice invokes the mother; then you hear the grand trio toward which the opera has been moving—the triumph of the soul over matter and the Spirit of Good over the Spirit of Evil. The religious music scatters the infernal chorus; righteousness rises triumphant. But here the music dies away. I see a cathedral instead of hearing a chorus of angels. A divine prayer of purified souls signalizes the union of Robert and Isabel. But we ought not to remain under the spell of the devilish enchantments; we should go out with hope in our hearts. I, a Catholic musician, would have preferred a prayer like that in Moses. I should have liked to know how Germany would have matched Italy; what Meyerbeer would have done to rival Rossini. However, in spite of this slight defect, the composer cannot say, after five hours of such substantial music, that a Parisian prefers a ribbon in his buttonhole to a musical classic! You have heard the praises showered upon this work; it will have five hundred performances. If the French have understood this music . . ."

"It is because it portrays ideas," said the Count.

"No, it is because it truthfully presents the image of a struggle in which so many men go under, and because every individual existence might look upon it as a counterpart of its own. Thus I, when unhappy, would become overjoyed at hearing that chorus of celestial voices of which I have so often dreamed."

Gambara immediately fell into a musical ecstasy, and improvised the sweetest and most harmonious cavatina that Andrea had ever heard, a divine song divinely sung, whose theme was comparable to that of "O filii et filiæ," but full of charms which only the highest musical genius could hope to express. It plunged the Count into the most delicious revery: the clouds vanished, the heavens opened in an indescribable azure, angels appeared and lifted the veil which hid the Holy of Holies; the heavenly light fell in torrents.

Soon silence reigned. The Count, surprised to hear nothing more, looked at Gambara, who, his eyes fixed as one in a trance, was muttering the word *God!* The Count waited for the composer to descend from the enchanted land in which he had been soaring on the wings of inspiration before he spoke.

"Well," he said, offering Gambara another glass of wine and drinking with him, "you see that this German has created in your own opinion a sublime opera, without troubling himself about theory, while musicians who write grammars may be, like literary critics, detestable composers."

"Then you do not like my music?"

"I did not say that; but if, instead of trying to express ideas and thereby pushing musical principles to their extremes, you would simply awaken in us emotions, you would be better understood, granted that you are not mistaken in your vocation. You are a great poet."

"What!" said Gambara, "twenty-five years of study wasted! I must devote myself to the imperfect language of man when I have found the key to the Divine Word! Ah, if you were right, I should die. . . ."

"You? No. You are great and strong, you will begin your life over again, and I shall help you. We will present to the world the noble and rare spectacle of a partnership between a rich man and an artist who understand each other."

"Are you in earnest?" said Gambara, stupefied.

"I have already told you; you are more of a poet than a musician."

"Poet! poet! That is better than nothing. But tell me: do you rank Homer above Mozart?"

"I admire both equally."

"On your honor?"

"On my honor."

"H'm! let me ask you another question. What do you think of Meyerbeer and Byron?"

"That you have judged them correctly by naming them together."

The Count's carriage was ready. The composer and his magnanimous physician quickly descended the stairs and entered the room in which Marianna was sitting. Gambara threw himself into the arms of his wife, who recoiled, turning her head away. The husband also stepped back and leaned upon the Count.

"Ah, sir," said Gambara in a thick voice, "at least you might have left me my madness . . ."

His head sank on his breast and he fell to the floor.

"What have you done? He is dead drunk," cried Marianna, casting a look of mingled pity and disgust at her husband's prostrate form.

The Count, aided by his man, raised Gambara and placed him on the bed.

When Andrea went out his heart was filled with a strange joy.

But the next day the Count did not make his usual visit; he was beginning to believe that he had made a fool of himself, that the comfort and wisdom of this poor couple, whose peace of mind was now troubled forever, was too dearly bought.

At last Giardini appeared, bringing a note from Marianna.

"Come," she wrote, "the calamity is not so great as you intended it should be, cruel man!"

"Your Excellency," said the cook, while Andrea was making his toilet, "you treated us magnificently the other evening, but, with the exception of the wines, which were excellent, your cook did not serve a single dish worthy to be set on a gentleman's table. I do not suppose you will deny that the viands with which you were served when you did me the honor to dine at my restaurant were much superior. Therefore, when I awoke this morning, I remembered your promise to make me your chef. I now consider myself as a part of your household."

"The same thought struck me some days ago," replied Andrea. "I spoke of you to the secretary of the Austrian Embassy, and you are now at liberty to cross the Alps whenever you please. I have a country-house in Croatia which I but seldom visit; there you will fulfil the duties of caretaker, porter and cook, at a salary of two hundred crowns. This will include your wife's pay. You can then devote yourself to experiments *in anima vili;* that is to say, on the palates of my retainers. Here is a draft on my banker for your travelling expenses."

Giardini kissed the Count's hand in Neapolitan fashion. "Your Excellency," said he, "I accept the draft, but I must refuse the position. It would dishonor me to abandon my art by putting myself beyond the pale of the finest connoisseurs of cookery in the world, who are undoubtedly the Parisians."

When Andrea appeared at Gambara's apartment the latter rose and came toward him.

"My generous friend," said he in the frankest possible manner, "either you took advantage of the state of my senses last night or your own brain is no more proof than mine against the fumes of our fine Italian wines. But I will assume the latter proposition; I would rather blame your head than your heart. But whatever it may have been, I have decided to give up forever the use of wine, the abuse of which last night led me into so many follies. When I think that I almost . . ." Here he cast an anxious look at Marianna.

"As to the miserable opera which we heard, I have reflected considerably upon it; it is only music brought out by ordinary means, mountains of notes heaped upon one another; it is but the dregs of the ambrosia which I drink in deep draughts as I render the celestial music that comes to me! It is a mass of cut-up phrases, the origin of which is easy to recognize. The piece 'Glory to Providence!' is a little too much like Handel; the Chorus of Knights going to battle is a descendant of the Scotch air in the 'White

Lady.' Finally, if the opera is so much liked it is only because the music is of a kind which is taken from everybody's, and so cannot help being popular. But I must leave you, my dear friend. Ever since this morning ideas have been running through my head, only asking to soar heavenward on the wings of music, but I wished to see you and speak with you. Farewell! I am going to ask pardon of my muse. We shall dine together this evening, but no wine, for me at least. I am quite decided. . . ."

"I despair of him," said Andrea, coloring.

"Ah, you take a weight off my conscience," cried Marianna; "I dared not consult it any longer. My friend! my friend! it is not our fault; he does not wish to be cured."

Six years afterward, in January, 1837, many artists who were unfortunate enough to injure their brass or stringed instruments took them to the Rue Froidmanteau, to a dirty, disreputable house on the fifth floor of which lived an old Italian named Gambara. For five years past the composer had been abandoned by his wife, and nothing but misfortune seemed to come to him. An instrument which he relied upon to make his fortune, and which he had called a "panharmonicon," had been sold for debt on the Place du Chatelet, together with a mass of paper scrawled over with notes of music. The day after the sale these rolls of music were being used at the markets to wrap up butter, fish and fruit. So that the three great operas, as the poor man called them, but which an old Neapolitan cook, who had degenerated into a broken meat huckster, insisted were no more than a pack of nonsense, had been scattered about Paris in the baskets of the market women. But no matter, the landlord had received his rent and the bailiffs had been paid their charges. The old Neapolitan huckster, who sold the remains of banquets to the denizens of the Rue Froidmanteau, said that the Signora Gambara had gone off to Italy with a great Milanese nobleman, and nobody knew what had become of her. Driven to desperation by fifteen years of poverty, she had probably ruined the Count by her extravagance, for never in his life had the Neapolitan seen two people so much in love with each other.

Toward the end of that same January, one evening as Giardini the huckster was talking with a woman, who was buying her supper of him, about that divine Marianna, so pure, so beautiful and so nobly devoted to her husband, but who had turned out like all the rest, he saw coming up the street a gaunt woman with a pinched, browned face—a nervous and tottering skeleton, who was scrutinizing the numbers as though looking for some particular house.

"Why! there is Marianna herself!" cried the huckster in Italian.

Marianna recognized the old Neapolitan cook Giardini in the poor vender of scraps, without troubling herself to ask him by what series of misfortunes he had sunk to the squalid huckster shop. She staggered into the house and fell into a chair, for she had come all the way from Fontainebleau; she had walked fourteen leagues that day, and had begged her bread from Turin to Paris. All that remained of her wonderful beauty was her eyes. The only thing faithful to her was misfortune. But she was welcomed by the old instrument mender, who saw her enter with indescribable joy.

"So here you are, my poor Marianna!" said he, delighted. "In your absence *they* sold my instruments and my operas!"

It would have been difficult to kill the fatted calf for the wanderer's return, but Giardini provided the remains of a salmon, the woman paid for the wine, Gambara offered his bread and Signora Giardini spread the cloth. And then those five creatures, so unlike in everything but misfortune, supped together in the composer's attic.

On being questioned about her experiences, Marianna refused to answer, but she raised her still beautiful eyes to heaven as she said in a low voice to Giardini—

"He married a dancer!"

"How could you come so far?" said the woman. "The journey has all but killed you and—"

"And aged me," said Marianna. "No! it was neither fatigue nor want; it was grief."

"But why did you not send word to your lover?" asked the woman.

Marianna looked at her in silence.

"She is proud," said she. "And much good will it do her!" she added in Giardini's ear.

In that year the musicians were so careful of their instruments that the repairs did not amount to enough to defray the expenses of the poor household; the wife could not earn much with her needle now. So the couple had to come down to singing in the street for a livelihood.

They would go over to the Champs Elysées in the evening and sing duets, which Gambara, poor man, accompanied on his villanous guitar. On the way, his wife, who on these occasions wore a heavy muslin veil, would take her husband to a wine shop in the Faubourg Saint Honoré and make him drink several glasses of brandy; for if he were not intoxicated he could not play. They would stand in front of the gayly dressed throng, and one of the greatest geniuses of the age, the unknown Orpheus of modern music, would play fragments of own his compositions, and the pieces were so remarkable that they managed to squeeze a few coppers out of Parisian indifference. If some habitué of comic opera chanced to be sitting there and did not recognize the opera from which they were taken, he would question the woman dressed like a Grecian priestess who held out to him the plate in which she collected contributions.

"My dear, what is that music taken from?"

"From the opera of 'Mahomet,' " Marianna would reply.

As Rossini has composed a "Mahomet II.," the opera-goer would say to his wife—

"What a pity it is that they do not give us Rossini's new operas at the Italiens. That is really very fine music."

Then Gambara would smile.

Only a few days before the poor couple had been compelled to pay the miserable sum of twenty-six francs to their landlord for the rent of their attic, and the wine merchant would not give credit for the brandy which the wife gave her husband to make him play well; so the music became so detestable that the public would give nothing and the plate returned empty.

It was nine o'clock in the evening when a beautiful Italian lady, Princess Massimilla di Varesi, took pity on the poor couple. She gave them forty francs, as she recognized from the woman's accent when she questioned her that she was a Venetian. Prince Emilio desired to know the history of their misfortunes, and Marianna told it with never a complaint against man or Providence.

"Madame," said Gambara, who was sober, "we are the victims of our own superiority. My music is beautiful, but, as soon as music passes from the realm of sensations to that of ideas it is acceptable only to men of genius, for they alone have the power to understand it. My misfortune arises from having heard the angelic chorus and having believed that men might understand them. The same misfortune often happens to women, when love appears to them in a divine form, and then men cannot understand them."

Those words were in themselves worth the forty francs already given by Massimilla, so she took another piece of gold from her purse, telling Marianna that she would write to Andrea Marcosini.

"Do not write to him, Madame," said Marianna, "and may God keep you always beautiful!"

"Shall we not take care of them?" asked the Princess of her husband; "for this man has remained true to the IDEAL which we have destroyed."

THE KING'S FRIEND

IT IS ON All Saints' Day, 1479, as vespers were closing in the cathedral of the borough of Tours, that this story begins. The Archbishop was rising from his chair to give the benediction in person to the faithful there assembled. The sermon had been long; darkness had gathered during divine service, and now completely enshrouded some parts of the church. A fair number of candles were, however, burning in honor of the saints in the triangular candlesticks intended for these pious offerings. Tapers were burning on every altar and the candelabra in the choir. Falling irregularly among the forest of pillars and arches sustaining the three aisles of the cathedral, these floods of light shed scarcely a ray upon the vast nave, but by projecting the broad shadows of the pillars across the building deepened yet more the natural gloom under the vaulting and in the side chapels. The congregation presented picturesque features. Some figures were so faintly outlined in the dim light that they might have been taken for ghosts, while others, in the path of some bright beam, stood out like the principal characters of a painting. The statues seemed alive and the men and women turned to stone. Here and there eyes sparkled in the groove of a column, the stone had sight, the marble spoke, the arches echoed sighs, the whole sacred edifice breathed.

The life of nations knows no scenes more solemn or imposing. Masses of men need movement to produce poetic effects, but in these periods of religious worship, when the wealth of human thought soars up to highest heaven, there is sublimity in silence; fear trembles in bent knees and folded hands avow hope. The concert of prayer in which all souls join at such times results in a marvellous spiritual phenomenon: the mystical exaltation of the believers reacts upon each individual; the weakest are no doubt borne up on the tide of faith and love. For so does the power of prayer, strong as an electrical current, draw us out of ourselves. The unconscious union of all hearts, lifted heavenward at once, perhaps contains the secret of the magic influence of priestly chant and organ's drone, of the altar's incense and magnificence, of the congregation's loud voice and silent meditations. Nor must we be surprised to see, in the Middle Ages, so many loves begun in church after long hours of ecstasy, loves that often ended in very earthly fashion, but always with penitence and tears, as is women's wont. Religious feeling in those days had some affinity with the tender passion, being either the incentive to it or the result of it. Love itself was a religion, with its fine frenzies, its simple superstitions and sublime sacrifices, all according with those of Christianity. The customs of the time, too, point to the relation between love and religion. In the first place, society rarely mixed excepting before the altar. Lords and vassals, men and women, were equal in no other place. There only could lovers of different rank meet and communicate with each other. Besides, the church feasts were the plays and the parties of those days, when a woman's soul was more deeply stirred in a cathedral than it is in this age at a ball or at the opera. Do not all strong emotions beckon women in the direction of love?

At the moment when the priests ceased their chanting, and when the final notes of the organ mingled with the fading Amen from the big-chested choristers, while a slight murmur lingered an instant under the more distant arches and the attentive worshippers were awaiting the prelate's message of healing, at this moment did a burgess, in haste to get home or afraid for his purse in the bustle of going out, leave his chair and softly steal away at the risk of being branded a bad Catholic. A gentleman, who was leaning against one of the enormous pillars inclosing the choir, and where he had stood hidden by its shadow, at once took the place vacated by the cautious burgess. Concealing his face in the feathers which adorned his tall gray cap, he knelt down with an air of contrition that would have deceived an inquisitor. After narrowly scrutinizing this young man, his neighbors appeared to recognize him, and resumed their orisons with unequivocal gestures of suspicion and raillery. Two old women nodded their heads as they exchanged glances which rummaged the future. The chair taken by the young man stood adjacent to a chapel built in between two pillars and closed off by an iron railing. The chapter was then in the habit of letting out—in consideration of handsome fees—to some noble families, or even rich burgesses, the privilege of taking part in the service in the side chapels skirting the outer aisles of the cathedral. This form of simony is practiced even nowadays. A lady would then have her chapel in church as she has her box at the opera in our day. The holders of these private nooks were also obliged to keep in condition the altar allotted to them. Each one therefore made it a point of pride to decorate hers with fastidious and expensive taste, a weakness comfortably tolerated by the Church.

In the particular chapel aforementioned a young lady was kneeling on a handsome cushion of red velvet next to the very spot just left vacant by the burgess. A lamp of enamelled silver, hanging down from the vault of the cathedral before an altar luxuriously decked out, shed its pale light on the lady's prayer book. The book shook violently in her hands as the young man took his place beside her. To the response *Amen*, which the lady sang in a sweet but agitated voice, happily drowned in the general volume of sound, she added hastily and in a low tone: "You will ruin me!"

The words were spoken with an accent of innocence which any man of delicate feeling must have obeyed; they went straight to the heart and entered there. But the stranger, no doubt carried away by a gust of passion that stifled conscience, remained in his seat and slightly raised his head to look into the chapel.

"He is asleep," he replied in a voice so carefully subdued that the answer fell upon the young woman's ear like a dying echo.

The lady turned pale; her eyes strayed for a furtive moment from the parchment page of the book and glanced at the old man to whom the youth had alluded. After her cursory look at the old man she drew a deep breath and lifted her lovely brow, adorned with a costly jewelled ornament, to a painted picture of the Holy Virgin. This simple and direct appeal characterized the purity and integrity of her life. The person who caused the two lovers such alarm was a little old hunchback, almost bald, with a fierce countenance and a long, fan-shaped, white beard. The cross of

Saint Michael glittered on his breast; his powerful, rough hands, furred with gray hair, which had evidently been joined in prayer, had fallen apart in the nap he had imprudently given way to. His right hand seemed about to drop on the hilt of his dagger, whose handle was a sort of carved iron shell, and, from the position of the weapon, its hilt was just beneath his hand, so that if he perchance touched the dagger he must infallibly awake and see his wife. His sardonic mouth and his ill-natured, pointed chin sufficiently betokened a malignant spirit and a cold, cruel sagacity which enabled him to guess everything because he could imagine anything. His yellow forehead was wrinkled in the manner of one who believes nothing, but weighs all things, and who, like a miser fingering his gold, probes every human action for its exact meaning and import. He had a massive, bony frame and looked nervous and irritable—within an inch of an ogre in fact. The awakening of her terrible lord threatened the lady with great danger, for her jealous husband could not fail to observe the difference between the harmless old burgess, whose proximity he had not in the least resented, and the new-comer, a young, well-formed, elegant courtier.

"*Libera nos a malo!*" said the lady, trying to communicate her fears to the persistent young gentleman.

He raised his head again and looked at her. Tears were standing in his eyes, tears of love or of despair. Seeing this the lady trembled—and was lost. Both had no doubt held out long against a passion increasing day by day because of the invincible obstacles opposing it, and because nourished by the fear of discovery and emboldened by the fervor of youth. The woman was not strikingly beautiful, but her pallor betrayed secret sufferings that rendered her interesting. Her figure was finely molded, moreover, and she had the most magnificent hair. Watched over by a tiger, she perhaps was risking her life in saying a word, in allowing her hand to be pressed, or in returning a look. If ever love was more deeply buried in two hearts, and more dearly cherished, no affection could have been beset with such imminent perils. It may be easily understood that to these two beings the air, the surrounding sounds, the footsteps on the pavement, and many things quite unperceived by others had qualities and properties which they recognized and felt. Theirs was a deep love, cut into the soul like a scar in the body and remaining for life. The lovers exchanging looks, the woman seemed to say, "Let us die, but let us love," and the gentleman seemed to answer, "We will love and not die." And then, with a melancholy inclination of the head, she called his attention to an old duenna and two pages. The duenna was asleep. The pages were quite young and careless of any good or ill that might befall their master.

"Do not be alarmed as you go out, but give way quietly."

Hardly had the young man muttered these words in an undertone when the old man's hand came into contact with the hilt of his dagger. The cold iron at once roused him up; his yellow eyes at once fastened on his wife. By a peculiarity rarely possessed even by men of genius, he awoke with as clear ideas and powers of perception as though he had not been dozing. This because the man was jealous. But the lover had gazed at his mistress with one eye and had kept the other on her husband; he got up quickly and disappeared behind a pillar the moment that the old man's hand moved, and then vanished from sight altogether, as lightly as a bird. The lady promptly cast down her eyes, busied herself with her book, and assumed a calm demeanor. But she could not help blushing nor stop the furious throbbing of her heart. Her husband became conscious of the strong pulsations which vibrated through the chapel, and noticed the unusual flush overspreading his wife's cheeks, forehead, and eyelids. He looked cautiously about him, and seeing no one of suspicious bearing said—

"What are you thinking of, my dear?"

"The smell of the incense makes me feel faint," she answered.

"Is it bad to-day, then?"

In spite of his comment, the wily old man affected to believe the lady's excuse, but he scented treason and resolved to guard his treasure all the more closely.

The benediction was given. Without awaiting the end of the "Sæcula sæculorum," the crowd poured out at the doors like a torrent. In accordance with his usual habit, the old lord prudently tarried behind until the first rush had abated, and then started forth, sending the duenna on in front with a page, who bore a torch. He gave his arm to his wife, and the second page brought up the rear. Just as the old man reached the side door in the eastern wing, through which he usually went out, a living stream detached itself from the crowd obstructing the main door and flowed toward the place where he was standing with his people, leaving him no chance to retrace his steps. The lord and his wife were pushed out by the heavy pressure of numbers, the husband trying to go in front and to drag the lady by the arm. But at this moment he was violently jostled into the street and his wife snatched away by a strange hand. The terrible hunchback suddenly discovered himself the victim of a long-prepared plot. Repenting of having slept so long, he gathered up all his strength, with one hand clutched at his wife's dress, and with the other attempted to hold fast to the door. The ardor of love, however, got the better of the strength of jealousy. The young gentleman seized his mistress by the waist and carried her off so rapidly and desperately that the silk brocade yielded and tore, and the husband was left with part of a sleeve in his hand. A leonine roar at once overtopped the noise of the crowd, and a tremendous voice shouted—

"Help! Poitiers! The Count de Saint-Vallier's men to the door! Help here!"

And Count Aymar de Poitiers, Sire de Saint-Vallier, attempted to draw his sword and clear a way; but he found himself surrounded and hemmed in by thirty or forty gentlemen, whom it would have been dangerous to attack. Several among them, nobles of the highest rank, answered him with gibes, as they pulled him out to the cloisters. With lightning speed the ravisher had made with the Countess for an open chapel, where he seated her on a wooden bench behind the confessional. By the light of the tapers burning before the picture of the saint to whom the chapel was dedicated they looked into one another's faces for a moment in silence, clasping hands, and both astonished at their own temerity. The Countess could not summon up the cruel courage to reprove the young man for the hardihood to which they were indebted for this first, perilous minute of bliss.

"Will you fly with me to a neighboring country?" eagerly asked the young gentleman. "I have two English genets ready near here that can go thirty leagues without stopping."

"Ah!" she cried sweetly, "where in all the wide world will you find a refuge for a daughter of Louis XI.?"

"That is true," said the gentleman, taken aback at not having foreseen that objection.

"Then why did you tear me away from my husband?" she asked in terror.

"Alas," answered the cavalier, "I never reckoned on feeling this confusion at finding myself so near you and hearing you speak. I had two or three different plans, and now that I see you everything seems accomplished."

"But I am lost!" gasped the Countess.

"We are saved!" exclaimed the gentleman with the blind enthusiasm of love. "Listen to me—"

"This will cost me my life," she went on, as the tears rolled down her cheeks. "The Count will kill me—this very evening perhaps! But go to the King and tell him what torments his daughter has endured these five years. He loved me when I was a little child, and jestingly called me Mary-full-of-grace, because I was ugly. Oh! if he knew what a man he gave me to he would be terribly angry! I have never complained, out of pity for the Count. Besides, how should my complaint reach the King's ears? Even my father-confessor is one of Saint-Vallier's spies. I only consented to this wrongful escape because I hoped to find a champion. But may I trust to—? Oh!" she cried, turning pale as she broke off, "here comes the page!"

The poor Countess tried to make a veil of her hands to hide her face.

"Fear nothing," said the young cavalier, "he is on our side. You may use his services with safety, as he is faithful to me. When the Count comes to look for you he will warn us in good time. In that confessional," he added in a whisper, "is a canon, who is a friend of mine, who will be supposed to have rescued you from the scuffle and brought you in here for protection. You see, everything has been thought of to deceive Saint-Vallier."

At these consoling words the Countess dried her eyes, but another cloud immediately settled on her brow.

"It is impossible to deceive him!" she said. "By this evening he will know all. You must forestall his wrath! Go to Le Plessis, see the King, tell him—"

She hesitated an instant, but, plucking up courage, went on—

"Yes, tell him that the Count has maltreated me, that he has dragged me by the hair, that I am nothing more than his prisoner, that he makes a slave of me! Tell him that—"

Her heart was swelling, sobs choked her utterance, tears fell from her eyes, and in her extreme agitation she allowed the young man to kiss her hands, while he at the same time stammered incoherent phrases.

"No one can get access to the King, my poor angel! For aught that I am the nephew of the commander of the bowmen I shall not see the inside of Le Plessis to-night. Most lovely lady, queen of my heart! Heavens! how she has suffered! Marie, let me say two words to you or we are lost!"

"What is to become of us?" lamented the Countess, and catching sight of a picture of the Virgin on the dark wall she cried out—

"Holy Mother of God, give us thine aid!"

"This night," said her lover, "I will be with you."

"How?" she simply asked.

"This evening I intend to offer myself as apprentice to Master Cornelius, the King's goldsmith. I have succeeded in procuring a letter of recommendation which will be sufficient to persuade him to take me in. His house is next to yours. Once I am under the old rascal's roof, by the means of a silken rope-ladder I shall find my way to your apartment."

"Oh!" she exclaimed aghast, "if you love me, do not go near Master Cornelius!"

"Then you do love me!" he cried, clasping her to his breast with all the strength of fervent youth.

"Yes! Are you not my only hope? You are a gentleman, and I put my honor in your hands! And I know," she continued with dignified confidence, "that I am too unfortunate for you to betray my trust. But what is the use of all this? Go, go! Leave me to die, but do not enter Cornelius's house! Do you not know that all his apprentices—"

"Have been hanged?" laughed the gentleman. "Do you think his riches will tempt me?"

"Oh! do not go! You will be the victim of some sorcery!"

"I could never pay dearly enough for the happiness of serving you!" he answered, with a look so burning that she cast down her eyes

"And my husband?"

"Here is something which will send him to sleep," replied the young man, drawing a small phial from his belt.

"Not forever?" asked the Countess, trembling.

The young man's answer was a horrified gesture, to which he added—

"I should have challenged him to fight a duel if he had not been so old. God forbid that I should ever put him out of the way with poison!"

"Forgive me!" said the Countess, blushing. "I am cruelly punished for my sins. In a moment of despair I wanted to kill the Count; I feared you might have the same thought. My grief is so deep that I have not yet been able to confess my unholy wish in church, but I was afraid he would be informed of it and would take revenge.—Are you ashamed of me?" she said, nettled at the young man's silence. And she flung the philter to the ground, where it shattered into many fragments.

"Do not come!" she cried; "the Count sleeps lightly. It is my duty to wait for succor from above. And so will I do!"

She turned to go.

"Ah!" cried the young man, "command and I will kill him! You shall see me to-night!"

"I was wise to spill the drug," she said, in a voice faint with emotion at being loved so passionately. "The fear of awakening my husband will save us from ourselves."

"I pledge you my life," rejoined he, pressing her hand.

"If the King gives his consent the Pope can annul my marriage. And then we shall be united," she added, casting a look at him full of sweetest promises.

"Here comes Monseigneur!" exclaimed the page, hurrying up.

At this the gentleman, astonished at the quick flight of time and at the Count's swift arrival, snatched a kiss, which the lady could not refuse.

"This evening!" he called to her as he slipped out of the chapel.

Under cover of the darkness the lover made his way to the main porch, creeping from pillar to pillar in the long shadows thrown by the tall columns across the church. An old canon suddenly stepped out from the confessional and took a place by the Countess, after softly closing the gate, before which the page was walking sentinel with the gravity of a man-at-arms. Bright lights heralded the Count's approach. Accompanied by a few friends and by retainers bearing torches, he carried his naked sword in his hand. His sinister eye seemed to pierce the blackest gloom and search the darkest corners of the cathedral.

"Monseigneur, Madame is here," said the page, advancing to meet him.

The Count de Saint-Vallier found his wife kneeling in front of the altar and the canon standing up reading his breviary. Which seeing, he fiercely rattled at the gate, as if to give vent to his wrath.

"What are you seeking in this church, sword in hand?" the canon asked him.

"Father, this gentleman is my husband," replied the Countess.

The priest took the key out of his sleeve and opened the chapel gate. The Count involuntarily looked round the confessional and then went in.

"Monsieur," said his wife, "you owe thanks to this venerable priest who gave me shelter here."

The lord of Saint Vallier turned pale with rage, and dared not to look at his friends, who had come to laugh at him rather than help him. He replied curtly:

"Thank you, father, I will find some way of rewarding you."

He took his wife by the arm, and, not allowing her time to take leave of the canon, motioned to his people and marched out of the church without proffering a word. There was something ferocious in his silence. Impatient to be at home, and delving for a plan to find out the truth, he went moodily along the winding streets. Preceded by the torchbearers, who lighted the way through the part of the town bordering on the Loire, he followed mechanically, now and again casting a sombre glance at his wife and the page to detect signs of intelligence between them which would explain this puzzling adventure. The Count finally arrived at the Rue du Murier, where his house was situated. When his party had passed in, and the heavy gate was closed, deep silence reigned in the narrow street, where at that time some noblemen resided, for this new section of the town adjoined Le Plessis, the king's usual residence, thus made accessible to his courtiers at a moment's notice. The last house in the street was also the last in the town, and belonged to one Cornelius Hoogworst, a former merchant of Brabant, whom Louis XI. intrusted with the financial operations that his crafty policy required to be enacted abroad.

For reasons favoring his jealous tyranny over his wife, the Count de Saint-Vallier had established himself in the house next to Hoogworst's. It was known as the Hotel de Poitiers, and on the north was protected by the wall and the moat which surrounded the ancient borough of Chateauneuf, skirted by an embankment newly built by Louis IX. between the boroughs of Tours and Le Plessis. On that side dogs guarded the entrance to the mansion, which a spacious courtyard separated from the adjacent houses on the east, and which on the west stood against the house of Master Cornelius. The street front faced south. Thus isolated on three sides, the suspicious and wily Count was in no danger except from the side of the Brabanter's lodging, whose roof was a continuation of the Hotel de Poitier's. The narrow windows overlooking the street were cut in the stone walls and provided with iron bars. The door, low and vaulted like the entrances to our oldest prisons, was stout and substantial. Outside the porch stood a stone bench, used for mounting on horseback. Both houses looked like small fortresses and could have resisted a long attack by an angry mob. At their corners were turrets such as antiquarians still admire in towns as yet spared by the destructive innovator, and the openings in them allowed of the iron-bound shutters and doors being of formidable strength. These precautionary measures were amply justified by the revolts and civil wars which in those days were of such frequent occurrence.

As the hour of six tolled from the Abbey of Saint-Martin, the Countess's lover passed in front of the Hotel de Poitiers, and stopped a moment to listen to the noise of the Count's servants supping on the ground floor. After glancing up at the room where he supposed his lady love might dwell he made for the door of the next house. But on the verge of his terribly hazardous enterprise, the young cavalier stood pensive a while before the goldsmith's house, recalling all the tales current about Master Cornelius, and which were the reason of the Countess's apprehension. In that age every one quaked at the name of magic, soldiers and lovers not excepted, and few minds were unreceptive to the weird or the wonderful. The lover of the Countess de Saint-Vallier, a daughter of Louis XI. by Madame de Sassenage, bold though he was, held back a moment before venturing into an enchanted house. The history of Cornelius Hoogworst will amply account for the confidence with which he inspired the Lord of Saint-Vallier, as well as for the Countess's alarm and her lover's hesitation at the man's door. But to enable the nineteenth century reader to fully comprehend how seemingly ordinary occurrences were regarded as supernatural, and to put him in touch with the medieval spirit, it is expedient to break into the present narration and rapidly review the career of Master Cornelius.

Being one of the wealthiest merchants of Ghent, and having incurred the displeasure of Charles, Duke of Burgundy, he had found a refuge and protection at the court of Louis XI. The king perceived the advantages to be derived from a man connected with the great financial houses of Flanders, Venice and the Levant. He conferred titles of nobility and naturalization on Cornelius, and flattered him, too—a rare thing with Louis XI. Indeed the Fleming liked the King as much as the King liked the Fleming. Both were cunning, suspicious, and avaricious; they were equally politic and equally well informed; they were both abreast of their time and understood one another to perfection. With the same alacrity they respectively forsook and returned to conscience and religion. And if we are to give credence to the jealous reports of Olivier le Daim and Tristan, the King went to take his licentious pleasures at the goldsmith's. The old Brabanter no doubt found amusement and profit in ministering to his royal client's capricious tastes. He had been a resident of Tours for nine years. The singular incidents that had happened in his house during that space had made him the object of general execration. He began by spending large sums on devices for the safe custody of his treasures. The contrivances secretly manufactured for him by the locksmiths of the town, and the queer precautions with which they were brought into the house, and their discretion insured, for a long time furnished material for miraculous tales that enlivened the firesides of Touraine. The old man was supposed to be endowed with Oriental wealth. The story-tellers of said province, the birthplace of French romançe, built chambers of gold and precious stones in the Fleming's house, never omitting to attribute his immense riches to infernal compacts. On arriving, Master Cornelius had been accompanied by two Flemish male servants, an old woman, and a young apprentice of gentle and prepossessing features. The young man served him as secretary, treasurer, messenger, and factotum. In the course of his first year at Tours a serious robbery took place in his establishment. The judicial investigation proved the theft to have been committed by some one living in the house. The miser had the two servants and his apprentice thrown into prison. The young man succumbed to the tortures inflicted upon him and died protesting innocence, while the others confessed, to escape that fate. But when the judge asked them what had become of the stolen money they made no answer, and they were again tortured and examined, and then sentenced to be hanged. On the way to the scaffold they reiterated their innocence after the manner of all men condemned to death. For many a day after was this strange affair the talk of the town.

Master Cornelius, more affected by the loss of his money than by the death of his retainers, lived on alone with the old woman, who was his sister. He obtained from the King the privilege of using the state couriers for his private business, gave his mules in charge of a neighboring muleteer, and thenceforth lived in complete solitude, seeing scarcely any one but the King, and transacting his business through the medium of the Jews, willing enough to work for him to get the benefit of his all-powerful influence.

Some time after the event above described, the King himself placed a young orphan, in whom he took much interest, with the goldsmith. The boy attended carefully to his master's affairs and got into his good graces. One winter's night some diamonds lodged with Cornelius by the King of England as security against a loan of a hundred thousand crowns were stolen, and suspicion fell upon the orphan. The King was the more severe with him as he had answered for his integrity. So the poor boy was hanged after a very summary examination by the Grand Provost.

Nobody dared go to learn the arts of banking and exchange from Hoogworst. Nevertheless, two young men of Tours, honorable and ambitious, successively entered his service. Large thefts occurred coincident with their admission; the circumstances of these crimes, and the way in which they were carried out, made it plain that collusion existed between the robbers and the inmates of the house; it was impossible that the new-comers should escape accusation. More suspicious and revengeful than ever, the Brabanter referred the facts to Louis XI. immediately, who turned the matter over to his Grand Provost. The trial was quickly begun and still more quickly ended. But the civic pride of the people of Tours demurred at Tristan's alacrity. Whether they were guilty or no, the two young men were regarded as victims, and Cornelius as a butcher. The two families in mourning were generally respected and esteemed, their cause became popular, and little by little they convinced all their friends of the innocence of every one sent to the gallows by the King's goldsmith. Some asserted that the cruel miser was following the King's example by putting terror and the gibbet between the world and himself; that he had never been robbed at all; that these wretched executions were the outcome of cold calculation; that he wanted to feel his money was safe. The first consequence of these rumors was Cornelius's isolation; the inhabitants of Tours treated him like one plague-stricken, called his dwelling the House of Evil and himself the Extortioner. Even if the goldsmith could have found a stranger bold enough to take service with him, the townspeople would certainly have dissuaded him by their talk. The most favorable opinion of Master Cornelius was entertained by those who merely looked upon him as a sinister individual. He inspired some with instinctive repulsion, and others with the admiring regard that accrues to the possessors of great power or wealth. To some he offered the attraction of mystery. His mode of life, his physiognomy, and the King's friendship, appeared to substantiate the current rumors regarding him.

Cornelius often travelled abroad after the death of his enemy, the Duke of Burgundy, and during his absence the King would order his banker's house to be guarded by members of his Scottish company. The royal solicitude gave rise to the belief that the miser had bequeathed his fortune to Louis XI. He was a good Catholic and visited church regularly, but he went very early, and having bought a chapel in perpetuity was there as elsewhere divided from other Christians. But for the monarch's vast power, which covered the place like a mantle, the populace would have destroyed the House of Evil in the Rue du Mûrier on the least provocation, and its tenant knew well enough that his resort would be the most dangerous in the world after the King's death.

"The devil is having a joke at the expense of our uncle Cornelius," said Louis XI. to his barber a few days before All Saints. "He is complaining again of having been robbed. But he has no one to hang now, unless he hangs himself. Did not the old rascal ask me if I had not carried off a chain of rubies he intended to sell me? Pasques-Dieu! I do not steal what I can take, I told him!"

"And was he frightened?" asked the barber.

"Misers are afraid of one thing only," replied the King. "Uncle knows very well I would not skin him without reason. Otherwise I should be unjust, and I have never done anything but what has been just and necessary."

"Still, the old villain cheats you," went on the barber.

"You would like it to be true, eh?" said the King with a malicious leer at Olivier le Daim.

"By the belly of Mahomet, Sire, 'twould be a fine legacy to divide between yourself and the devil!"

"Tush!" answered Louis. "Do not put wicked notions into my head. My uncle is more faithful than any man whose fortune I have made—possibly because he owes me nothing."

So for two years Master Cornelius had lived alone with his old sister, who passed for a witch. A tailor in their neighborhood declared he had often seen her on the roof at night waiting to fly to her Sabbath. This was the more wonderful as the miser locked up his sister in a room with iron bars before the windows. With advancing age, Cornelius, who had been robbed so often, had grown to distrust and hate all mankind except the King, for whom he had a sincere regard. His misanthropy was now extreme, and his avarice had increased in the same degree. Not even had he faith in his sister, though she was probably more miserly and economical than himself, and excelled him in sordid devices of cheeseparing. The old woman so rarely bought bread at the baker's, she appeared so infrequently at market, that the least superstitious observers at last began to attribute to these queer creatures the secret of some elixir of life. Dabblers in alchemy said Cornelius knew how to make gold. Men of learning stated that he had discovered the philosopher's stone. To many of the country folk, informed of his doings by the burghers, he was a sort of fantastical creation whose house was worth looking at from the outside.

Seated on a bench belonging to the house opposite the goldsmith's, the gentleman looked at the House of Evil and the Hotel de Poitiers by turns, and recalled all the traditions that stamped Cornelius as a personage at once curious and redoubtable. Although the intensity of his devotion to the lady had brought him to the decision of entering this house and of remaining there long enough to carry through his plans, he paused a moment before taking the final step, knowing full well he would take it. And who, at the climaxes of life, does not like to listen to presentiment and to walk the tight-rope of speculation? Being a lover worthy of requital, the young man feared he might die without receiving a token of love from the Countess. His meditations were so absorbing that he did not heed the cold wind whistling about his limbs and the corners of the houses.

When he entered the miser's lair he must renounce his name, just as he had already doffed his fine nobleman's garb. In the event of ill-luck, he was debarred from claiming the privileges of his descent or the help of his friends, at the risk of speedily and irrevocably ruining the Countess de Saint-Vallier. If the old lord once suspected a nocturnal visit from a lover, he was capable of gradually roasting his wife in an iron cage or of killing her seven times a week in seven different ways. Looking down at the shabby clothes he had on, the gentleman was ashamed of his appearance. To see his black leather belt, his thick shoes, his wrinkled hose, his frieze breeches, and his gray woollen jerkin, you would have taken him for the poorest sort of law sergeant's clerk. It meant ostracism to a noble of the fifteenth century to play the part of a common, penniless burgher and to forfeit the privileges of his rank. But to climb the roof of the house where his mistress was sighing; to crawl down the chimney or run along the parapet, and by creeping along the gutter pipes get to her window; to hazard his very life for the sake of kneeling beside her on a silk cushion while her appalling husband snored by the fire; to defy heaven and earth by audaciously kissing her on the lips; not to utter a word that would not entail death or at least a bloody fight; the hope of sweet response to his love from the lady—all these entrancing visions and the romantic jeopardy of the adventure carried the young man away. The expedition was too perilous and too impossible to refrain from.

As this last thought passed through his mind the curfew bell rang out all over the town. This regulation had fallen into desuetude, but was still observed in the provinces, where change moves slowly. Doors were closed, the footsteps of belated burgesses were faint in the distance, as they went their homeward way with servants armed to the teeth and bearing torches, and soon the whole town, gagged as it were, seemed to go to sleep, fearing no attack from malefactors unless by the roof. At that time the housetops were a favorite road of travel during the night. The streets were so narrow in provincial towns, and even in Paris, that thieves would jump across. This dangerous sport amused King Charles IX. in his boyhood, if contemporary writers speak true.

Afraid of being late, the young gentleman rapped at the door of the House of Evil. A light appeared, and through a stoutly barred wicket squinted an eye.

"Who is there?"

"A friend, sent by Oosterlinck of Bruges."

"What do you want?"

"Admission."

"Your name?"

"Philippe Goulénoire."

"Have you letters of introduction?"

"Here they are."

"Put them in the box."

"Where is it?"

"To your left."

Philippe Goulenoire threw a letter into an iron receptacle inside a loophole. After waiting for a quarter of an hour in the street he heard the voice of Cornelius again, speaking presumably to his sister—

"Shut the traps."

A clatter of chains and bolts sounded from the porch, upon which a very small, low door, clamped with iron, opened at an angle barely sufficient to allow the passage of a thin person. Nearly tearing his clothes, Philippe slid rather than walked into the House of Evil. A toothless old woman, with a face like a fiddle, eyebrows like the handles of a caldron, and not enough space between her hooked nose and chin for a nut, led the supposed stranger into a low room, Cornelius cautiously bringing up the rear. The pale, emaciated old maid, hollow at the temples and apparently all bones and sinews, bade Philippe be seated on a three-legged footstool near a large stone fireplace, with no fire on the hearth. At the other side of the chimney-piece was a walnut table with twisted legs, on which was an egg on a plate and a dozen strips of hard, dry bread, of the most parsimonious proportions. Two chairs, upon one of which the woman sat down, showed that the miser couple were in the act of supping. Cornelius went to close two iron shutters on the street front and returned to his place. The alleged Philippe Goulenoire now saw the brother and the sister take turns at dipping a strip of bread into the egg, with military precision, but scarcely coloring the bread so as to make the egg last as long as the strips. This performance proceeded in silence. While eating, Cornelius studied the sham apprentice with as much circumspection as though he had been testing some old coins. Philippe, feeling a chill overcome him, was tempted to look about, but with the cunning that a love adventure imparts he took good care not to cast an even furtive look at the walls, for he understood that if caught in the act he would be thought a too inquisitive person to be kept in the house. He therefore contented himself with looking alternately at the egg and the old maid, with an occasional glance at his future master.

Louis's banker resembled his sovereign somewhat; he had even acquired some of his gestures, as quite often happens when people live in a certain degree of intimacy with one another. The Fleming's bushy eyebrows almost covered his eyes, but when he raised them a little his glance was clear, penetrating, and powerful—the glance of a man accustomed to reticence and inward concentration of mind. His thin, furrowed lips gave him an expression of infinite subtlety. The lower part of his face remotely likened a fox's muzzle; but the high forehead, vaulted and deeply wrinkled, seemed to indicate great and grand qualities—a noble soul whose flights had been checked by experience, and which the cruel lessons of life had driven back into this strange being's most secret moral recesses, and there kept concealed. He certainly was no ordinary miser.

"What is the rate of Venetian sequins?" he abruptly asked his prospective apprentice.

"Three quarters at Bruges, one at Ghent."

"How much is freight on the Scheldt?"

"Three sous, Paris currency."

"Any news in Ghent?"

"Liéven d'Herde's brother is bankrupt."

"Ah!"

After allowing this ejaculation to escape him the old man covered his knees with one of the flaps of his long, black velvet coat, which had wide sleeves and no collar, which was open in front, and which was shiny from wear. This relic of the handsome garment he had once worn as president of the Parchons tribunal, in which capacity he had earned the Duke of Burgundy's hostility, was now but a wreck. Philippe was by no means cold in his thin disguise; he was bathed in perspiration and trembling lest he should be asked further questions. So far the brief instructions of a Jew whose life he had saved had sufficed, thanks to his own good memory and to the Jew's thorough knowledge of the usurer's ways and habits. But the gentleman, who in the first heat of enthusiasm for his enterprise had been aglow with confidence, now began to foresee many difficulties. The terrible Brabanter's solemn gravity and coldness were oppressive. Besides, he imagined himself under lock and key, and all the Grand Provost's ropes and engines at the beck of Master Cornelius.

"Have you had supper?" asked the goldsmith in a tone implying, "Take none."

"Yes, I have supped," answered the young man.

"Very well, then come to see me to-morrow. I have dispensed with an apprentice for a long time. I will think it over during the night."

"Now, by Saint Bavon, Monsieur! I am a Fleming, I know not a soul in this place, the town gates are shut, and I shall be cast into prison! However," he added, startled at the eagerness of his own accents, "I will go if it suits you best."

The oath impressed the goldsmith.

"Now, by Saint Bavon," he repeated, "you shall sleep here this night!"

"But—" the sister began to object.

"Silence," said Cornelius. "Oosterlinch answers for this young man in his letter," and leaning over to her went on in a whisper, "Have we not a hundred thousand livres belonging to Oosterlinch? Do you want better security?"

"And supposing he steals the Bavarian crown jewels? He looks much more like a thief than a Fleming."

"Hush!" said the old man, pricking up his ears.

The misers listened, and heard the footfall of some men in the distance, on the far side of the town moat.

"The rounds at Le Plessis," explained the old woman.

"Come, give me the key to the apprentice's room," demanded her brother.

She put out her skinny hand for the lamp.

"What? Are you going to leave us without a light?" exclaimed Cornelius indignantly. "Cannot you see in the dark at your age? Is it so hard to find the key?"

The old woman understood the hint conveyed, and went without the lamp.

As he watched the extraordinary creature moving to the door, Philippe Goulenoire was able to steal a surreptitious though rapid look round the room. It was wainscoted with oak half-way up the walls, the remainder being hung with yellow leather adorned by black arabesques. But what struck him most was a firelock pistol with a spring dagger attached. This new and formidable weapon was close to its owner's hand.

"How do you intend to make your living?" queried the goldsmith.

"I have very little money, but I know some good designs. If you will allow me only one sou on every mark I make for you I shall be satisfied."

"A sou is a great deal," remarked the miser.

Hereupon the old hag returned.

"Come," said Cornelius to Philippe.

They went out into the porch and ascended a spiral staircase within a tall tower. The young man stopped at the first floor.

"No, no!" exclaimed Cornelius. "The devil! why this is where the King takes his pleasure!"

The architect had built the apprentice's room under the conical roof at the head of the tower stair. It was a little, round chamber, chill and cheerless. The tower stood in the middle of the yard-front, which, like all provincial courtyards, was narrow and dark. Beyond lay a meagre garden, grown with nothing but mulberry trees, no doubt attended to by Cornelius himself. The gentleman saw this through the loopholes in the tower by the light, which happened to be shining brightly. A pallet bed, a stool, a cracked chest, and a jug made up the furniture of this den. The light only came in through little rectangular slits in the walls.

"This is your room. It is simple and safe, and contains everything you will want for sleeping. Good-night. Do not leave it as the others did."

After a parting look at his apprentice, fraught with meaning, Cornelius turned the key in the lock twice and took it away with him, leaving Philippe helplessly aghast. Alone, without a light, sitting on a stool in the garret which his predecessors had only quitted for the gallows, he felt like a wild animal caught in a sack. He jumped on the stool and raised himself on tiptoe to reach the level of the loopholes. He saw the river Loire, the beautiful hills of Saint-Cyr, and the sombre magnificence of Le Plessis, where lights twinkled from a few casements. Stretching out into the distance were the lovely landscapes of Touraine and the silvery surface of the river. The least details of the charming scene stood out with unwonted clearness; window panes, ponds, and roofs glistened like gems in the pellucid, tremulous moonlight. The young nobleman's soul was filled with a sweet, sorrowful movement.

"It may be the last time," said he to himself.

There he stood already anticipating the tremendous emotions of the adventure to come, and indulging in all the fears of a prisoner who still has a ray of hope. Every obstacle made his mistress more beautiful and more adorable. A faint cry, which he thought came from the Hotel de Poitiers, brought him back to himself and to his real situation. Sitting down on his pallet to reflect he heard a slight rustle on the stair. Listening very attentively he heard the words, "He is going to bed," spoken by the old woman. He undressed, lay down, and pretended to sleep, and, while the misers remained spying on him, employed the time in devising the means of getting from his cell to the Hotel de Poitiers. About ten o'clock, believing their apprentice to be asleep, the couple withdrew from their post on the stairs. The supposed Goulenoire traced the dull, disappearing sounds made by the Flemings and fancied he had discovered the position of their apartments. They occupied, he conceived, the whole of the second floor. As in all houses of the period that floor was next the roof, which was edged by a species of balustrade concealing the gutterspouts that overhung the street, shaped like crocodiles' mouths. After studying this map of the land as thoroughly as a cat would have done, the gentleman calculated to find egress upon the roof from the tower, and to make his way to Madame de Saint-Vallier's by the roof, along the gutter. But he perceived that the loopholes were too small, and therefore resolved to get out by the window on the stair landing of the second floor. To accomplish this bold scheme he must leave his room, and Cornelius had the key. The young man had taken the precaution to bring a dagger of the kind used to despatch one's opponent in a duel when he begged to be put out of pain. This horrible weapon had one edge as sharp as a razor and the other indented like a saw, the teeth pointing toward the handle. Its owner reckoned upon sawing out a piece surrounding the lock. Fortunately the staple was fastened on the inside of the door by four large screws. The dagger enabled him to unscrew the staple which kept him a prisoner, and the screws he carefully laid upon the chest. Toward midnight he was free, and crept downstairs without his shoes to survey the ground. His surprise was not small at seeing a wide-open door to a passage communicating with several rooms, at the end of it being a window overlooking the sort of valley formed by the meeting roofs of the Hotel de Poitiers and the House of Evil. After scrutinizing the tall, wide chimneys of the other house, he went back for his dagger; but he shuddered with fright at beholding a light shining on the stairs, and now saw Cornelius himself, in the long coat, lamp in hand, staring down the corridor with wide eyes while standing at its entrance like a spectre.

"If I open the window and jump out on the roof he will hear me!" was the young nobleman's thought.

Meanwhile the dreadful Cornelius came on—came as the hour of death comes upon a criminal. In his extremity, Goulenoire, his wits sharpened by love, preserved his entire presence of mind. He squeezed himself into the recess of a door and waited for the usurer to pass. When Cornelius, holding the lamp in front of him, was within the distance at which the youth could reach it with his breath, he blew it out. The goldsmith muttered a few incoherent words and an oath in Dutch, and retraced his steps. The gentleman then ran to his room, got his weapon, returned to the opportune window, opened it quietly, and jumped out upon the roof.

Once at liberty under the sky, he almost fainted with joy. It was perhaps the extreme agitation the danger had plunged him into that caused this sensation: the victory is often as perilous as the fight. Trembling with satisfaction he leaned against a parapet, asking himself:

"By which of those chimneys shall I crawl down into her room?"

He looked at them all. Love guiding his instinct he felt the chimneys to ascertain in which there had been a fire. When his mind was made up, the daring youth stuck his dagger between two stones, affixed his ladder there, and threw the other end over the edge of the chimney. Trusting to his good blade he then climbed down to his lady-love. He knew not whether Saint-Vallier was asleep or awake, but he was fully determined to clasp the Countess in his arms even if it should cost the lives of two men. His feet came gently into contact with warm ashes, and stooping down yet more gently he saw the Countess sitting in an armchair. By the light of a lamp the timid woman, pale and trembling with joy, pointed to her husband, who was fast asleep on a couch a few paces off. The lovers' lips met in a long, silent kiss, not echoed except in their hearts!

The next morning at nine, as Louis XI. was coming from chapel after hearing mass, he found Master Cornelius in his path.

"Good luck, uncle!" was all he said as he pulled his cap on.

"Sire, I would gladly pay a thousand crowns in gold for an audience with your Majesty, seeing that I have discovered the thief who stole the ruby chain and all the jewels—"

"Let us hear what this is," said Louis XI., issuing into the courtyard of Le Plessis, followed by his goldsmith, his doctor Coyctier, Olivier le Daim, and the captain of his Scottish bodyguard. "Tell me your story. We are to have a man hanged for you then? Hola, Tristan!"

The Grand Provost, who was walking up and down the yard, came up slowly, like a dog proud of its fidelity. The group halted under a tree. The King took a seat on a bench, and the courtiers formed round him in a circle.

"Your Majesty, a sham Fleming has been getting the better of me," began Cornelius.

"Then he must be a wily bird," observed Louis XI., shaking his head.

"Indeed he is," replied the goldsmith. "But I fancy he would have befooled even yourself. How could I have suspected a poor knave recommended by Oosterlinch, a man for whom I hold a hundred thousand livres? But I will wager the Jew's seal is a forgery. In short, Sire, I have been robbed of those handsome jewels you so admired. They have been pilfered from me, Sire! The Elector of Bavaria's jewels pilfered! These villains respect nothing; they would steal your kingdom if you were not watching it. Just now I went up to this apprentice's room, who is certainly a master thief. This time proofs will not be lacking. He unscrewed the staple of the lock, but when he came back, as the moon had gone down, he could not find all the screws. Going into the room I fortunately felt one under my foot. The rascal was asleep; he was tired. Imagine, gentlemen: he got down into my room by the chimney. To-morrow, or this evening rather, I will have him roasted. You can always learn something from a thief. He has a silk rope about him, and his clothes show signs of his journey on the roof and in the chimney. He intended to live with me and be the ruin of me, the bold rascal! Where can he have buried the jewels? Some countrymen saw him coming back to my house across the roofs early in the morning. His accomplices were waiting on the dam you made. Oh! Sire, you yourself are the accomplice of thieves who come in boats! And—snap! off they go with everything, and not a trace of them! But we have the ringleader, and a little dose of torture will get us all the information we want! It is in the interest of your Majesty's honor; there ought to be no thieves under such a great King!"

The King had ceased listening long since. He had fallen into one of the fits of meditation so frequent in his latter days. Profound silence reigned.

"It is your affair," said he to Tristan at last. "Go and dig it up."

He rose, advanced a few steps, and his courtiers left him to himself. Noticing Cornelius, who was making off on a mule in the Grand Provost's company, he asked:

"And the thousand crowns?"

"Oh, Sire, you are too great a King! No sum of money could pay for your justice!"

Louis XI. smiled. The courtiers envied the free speech and privileges of the old goldsmith, who soon vanished in the avenue of mulberry trees between Tours and Le Plessis.

Exhausted by fatigue, the young gentleman was sound asleep. On returning from his gallant expedition he no longer felt such spirit and ardor for combating distant or imaginary dangers—in which he now scarcely believed—as had urged him on to the delightful interview. He had thus put off cleaning his soiled clothes and effacing the proofs of his successful journey until the next day. It was a great mistake, but one toward which everything conspired. When, deprived of the light of the moon, which had set during his absence, he could not find all the screws belonging to the vexatious staple, he lost patience. Then, with the recklessness of a man overjoyed or fatigued, he trusted to his luck, which up till then had served him so well. He promised himself to get up at early dawn. But the events of the day and the excitement of the night interfered with the fulfilment of that obligation. Happiness is forgetful. Cornelius seemed less appalling to the young nobleman as he stretched himself on the pallet-bed where so many unfortunates had awakened only to go to the scaffold, and this carelessness was the undoing of him.

Of a sudden our young friend was roused from a smiling dream by an iron hand clapped upon his shoulder and the Grand Provost's sharp voice, which exclaimed:

"Come, you pious midnight Christian who go looking for the Lord in the dark! Come, get up!"

Philippe Goulenoire recognized Tristan's swarthy face and sardonic smile, and then saw Cornelius and his sister on the spiral stair and the Provost's men behind them. At the sight of all these diabolical visages, expressing either hatred or else the curiosity of executioners, the young man jumped up and rubbed his eyes.

"'Sdeath!" he cried, snatching his dagger from under his pillow, "this is the time to play with knives!"

"Aha," remarked Tristan, "we seem to have a gentleman here. Surely this is Georges d'Estouteville, the nephew of the grand captain of the crossbowmen!"

Hearing his right name proclaimed by Tristan, young d'Estouteville thought less of himself than of the dangers that would threaten his unfortunate mistress were he found out. To thwart all suspicion he therefore cried out at the top of his voice—

"Help! Vagabonds to the rescue!"

After this loud outburst from a man who was really desperate, the young nobleman, dagger in hand, made one bound out upon the landing. But the Grand Provost's satellites were accustomed to onslaughts of this kind. They seized Georges d'Estouteville promptly, without being surprised at his vigorous thrust at one of them, which glided off harmless on a steel corslet. They then disarmed him and bound his hands, and threw him on the bed before their pensive master. This person inspected the prisoner's hands, and, showing them to Cornelius as he scratched his beard, said—

"He has no more a robber's hands than an apprentice's; he is a gentleman."

"But, my good Tristan, the villain has despoiled me! I should like his hands toasted or fitted into your pretty little mittens! No doubt he is the chief of the legion of invisible fiends who know all my secrets, open my locks, rob me, and murder me. I shall get my precious rubies back and vast sums of money, and our King shall have crowns by the bushel!"

"Oh! our hiding-places are safer than yours!" said Georges smiling.

"Listen to the damned thief! He confesses!" screamed the miser.

The Grand Provost was busy examining Georges d'Estouteville's clothes and the lock.

"Was it you who unscrewed all those rivets?"

Georges made no reply.

"Well, do as you please about answering. You will have an opportunity to make your confession soon to Saint Rackbones," said Tristan, and he ordered the young man to be taken away.

A great crowd had gathered in the street. The murmurs of the populace grew louder every minute and seemed to threaten a riot. The news of the robbery had spread during the morning. Sympathy was declared at all hands on behalf of the apprentice, who was young and good-looking, and hatred revived against Cornelius. As Georges appeared, led by one of the Provost's men, who, though on horseback, held the prisoner by a stout leather thong attached to his arm, a fearful tumult arose. Whether for the purpose of looking at Philippe Goulenoire or of rescuing him, the last in the crowd pushed the first against the guard of cavalry outside the House of Evil. Just then Cornelius and his sister closed the door and the shutters with all the vehemence of panic. Tristan, who had not been trained to bow down to the mob of those days—seeing it was not as yet the sovereign people—made little ado about riots.

"Ride on, ride on!" was his order.

At the voice of their officer the soldiers urged on their horses to the end of the street. After a few of the spectators had fallen under the horses' hoofs, and others were crushed against walls and suffocated, the rest adopted the prudent course of betaking themselves to their respective homes.

"Room for the King's justice!" cried Tristan. "What are you all doing here? Do you want to be hanged? Go home, my friends, your joints are burning! Hola there, woman, your husband's breeches want mending! Back to your needle!"

Although these jests meant that the Grand Provost was in good humor, they were as effective in scattering the bravest as the plague would have been. Just as the crowd began to yield, Georges d'Estouteville was amazed to catch sight of his lovely Marie de Saint-Vallier at one of her windows, laughing with the Count. She making fun of him, the poor devoted lover, going to his death for her sake. Or perhaps she was amused at those whose caps had been knocked off by the soldiers. One must be twenty-three, richly endowed with illusions, believing in the love of women, infatuated to the fullest extent; one must have staked one's life gladly to win a kiss, and then have been betrayed, to understand the rage, the hate, and the despair that seized the heart of Georges d'Estouteville when he beheld his smiling mistress and the cool, indifferent glance she gave him. She had no doubt been there for some time, for her arms were leaning on a cushion. She was at her ease there, and her old monster appeared quite happy. The cursed hunchback was laughing, too! A few tears dropped from the young man's eyes, but as soon as Marie saw that she started back quickly. Then Georges' tears were suddenly dried, for he noticed the red and black plume of the friendly page, who was on tiptoe. The page spoke a few words in the Countess's ear and she returned to the window. She eluded her tyrant's spying and flashed a look at her lover, denoting the glee of a woman who has hoodwinked her Argus, and blazing the fire of love and the spirit of hope. Had she called out, "I am watching over you," the phrase would have been far less eloquent than that look, which uttered the thousand fears, delights and perils of their common situation. It bore him from heaven to martyrdom and from martyrdom to heaven. And so the young nobleman went on to his execution with a light heart, reckoning the torture to come as a small price for the raptures of love he had experienced.

As Tristan was turning out of the Rue du Mûrier his men halted at the appearance of an officer of the Scottish guard who was galloping up at full speed.

"What is it?" demanded the Provost.

"Nothing that concerns you," replied the officer disdainfully. "The King has sent me to invite the Count and Countess de Saint-Vallier to dinner."

Hardly had Tristan and his party reached the embankment of Le Plessis, when the Count and his wife, mounted on a horse and a white mule, and escorted by two pages, joined the troop to ride into Plessis-les-Tours together with them. The whole company moved slowly. Georges was walking between two soldiers on horseback, one of whom continued to hold him in leash. Tristan, Count Saint-Vallier and his wife were of course in the lead, the criminal coming behind them. Mingling with the horsemen, the young page asked them questions and occasionally spoke to the prisoner. He took an opportunity to whisper—

"I jumped over the garden wall and took a letter to Le Plessis, written to the King by Madame. She thought she would die when she heard of the theft you were accused of. But take courage! She will speak for you!"

Love had already lent the Countess moral strength and the courage to dissemble. When she had laughed, her gestures and mirth were the outcome of the heroism which women display in the great critical moments of their lives.

While waiting for the dinner hour, a meal that in those days took place between eleven o'clock and noon, Louis XI., who had come in from a short walk, was seated in a large tapestried armchair by the fireside in his room.

Olivier, the barber, and the doctor, Coyctier, were facing one another in absolute silence, and were standing in a window-bay while their master slumbered. The only audible noise was made by two chamberlains in waiting as they paced the antechamber. They were two Lords of Touraine, the Sire de Montrésor and Jean Dufou, Sire de Montbazon, and were then scanning the captain of the Scots, probably asleep in his easy-chair, according to his habit. The King appeared to be dozing. His head was sunk on his breast, his cap, pulled down over his forehead, almost covered his eyes. Thus perched in a high-backed chair surmounted by a royal crown, he looked like a man who had been overtaken by sleep in the course of meditation.

About that time Tristan and his train were crossing the Sainte-Anne bridge, two hundred yards from the castle.

"What is that?" asked the King.

The two courtiers looked at each other askance, in amazement.

"He is dreaming," whispered Coyctier.

"Pasques Dieu! do you think I am mad?" continued the King. "Some one is passing over the bridge. It is true that, being near the chimney, I can hear better than you others. That peculiarity of nature might be utilized."

"What a man!" said Olivier le Daim.

Louis XI. got up and went to a casement whence there was a view of the town. Then he saw the Grand Provost, and said—

"Aha, there is my friend with his thief. And there is my little Marie de Saint-Vallier, too—I had forgotten about that affair. Olivier," he turned to the barber, "go and tell Monsieur de Montbazon to give us some fine Bourgeuil wine at dinner, and see that the cook remembers to send up some lampreys: those are two things the Countess enjoys very much. May I eat lampreys?" he added after a pause, with an anxious look at Coyctier.

"Lampreys are not good for you," was the physician's answer.

"What am I to eat then?" humbly asked the King.

"Salted duck. Otherwise you are so full of bile that you might die on All Souls' day."

"To-day?" exclaimed the terror-struck King.

"Oh, be easy, Sire, I am here," replied Coyctier. "Try not to fret, and keep yourself amused."

"Ah!" said the King, "once upon a time my daughter used to be clever in that difficult art."

Upon which the Sire de Montrésor knocked softly at the royal door. By the King's leave he entered and announced the Count and Countess de Saint-Vallier. They were admitted, Marie's ancient spouse making room for her to pass in first.

"Good-day, my children," said the monarch.

"Sire," whispered the lady as she kissed him, "I would wish to speak to you in private."

Louis XI. pretended not to have heard her. He turned in the direction of the door, and cried in a hollow voice for Dufou, Lord of Montbazon, also high cup-bearer to his Majesty, who at once hurried in.

"Go and tell the steward I must have a salt duck to eat. Then go to Madame de Beaujeu, and say that I wish to dine alone to-day. Do you know, Madame," continued the King, affecting a little crossness, "that you are neglecting me? It is nearly three years now since I saw you last! Come, my pretty—here," he added, sitting down and putting out his arms. "How thin you are! What do you mean by making her thin?" he abruptly asked the Lord of Poitiers.

The jealous husband gave his wife such a timid look that she was almost sorry for him.

"It is happiness, Sire," he responded.

"Ah, you are too fond of each other," rejoined Louis, holding his daughter upright on his knees. "I see I was right in calling you Mary-full-of-grace. Coyctier, leave us! Now, what was it you wanted when you sent me your—?"

At this dangerous moment Marie audaciously put her hand over the King's mouth, whispering into his ear—

"I thought you were still discreet and observant."

"Saint-Vallier, I think Montrésor has something to say to you," laughed the sovereign.

The Count departed, but with a shrug of the shoulder very familiar to his wife, who guessed the jealous monster's thoughts, and judged it expedient to be on her guard against evil designs.

"Tell me, child, how am I looking?"

"Well, Sire, do you want the real truth, or do you want me to flatter you?"

"No, I want to know how I stand," came the reply in a hoarse voice.

"Your face does not look at all well to-day. But I do not want my veracity to hurt my petition."

"What is it?" frowned the King, passing a hand over his furrowed brow.

"Sire, the young man you caused to be arrested at your goldsmith's, and who is at present in the hands of your Grand Provost, is innocent of the theft of the Bavarian jewels."

"How do you know that?"

Marie hung her head and blushed.

"I need not ask if there is a love affair behind this," said Louis XI., raising his daughter's head tenderly and stroking her chin. "If you do not go to confession every morning, little girl, you will not go to heaven."

"Cannot you grant me a favor without violating my secret thoughts?"

"Where would the pleasure be?" exclaimed the King, who saw a chance of deriving amusement from this affair.

"Surely your pleasure is not to cost me sorrow?"

"You sly little cat, have you no confidence in me?"

"Then, Sire, have that gentleman liberated!"

"Oh! he is a gentleman," cried the king, "not an apprentice?"

"He is certainly an innocent man," she stated.

"I do not look at it in that light," was the cold answer. "I am supreme judge in my kingdom, and must punish all malefactors."

"Come, smile again, and give me that young man's life."

"Would not that be giving you back what is your own?"

"Sire, I am well conducted and virtuous! You are mocking me—"

"Well, since I am quite at a loss to understand this business, let Tristan explain it."

Marie de Sassenage turned pale, and with a violent effort said:

"Sire, I assure you that you will deplore this. The supposed culprit has taken nothing. If you grant his pardon I will acknowledge everything, even if you punish myself."

"Oho, this becomes serious!" said Louis, putting his cap aside. "Speak, my child."

"Well, then," she murmured, her lips at her father's ear, "that gentleman was in my room last night."

"He might have visited you and yet robbed Cornelius—a double delinquency!"

"Sire, your blood is in my veins, and I was not made to love vagabonds. The gentleman is a nephew of the captain-general of your bowmen."

"Pasques Dieu! you tell your story slowly!"

As he spoke Louis XI. pushed his daughter away from him and ran noiselessly on his toes to the door, under which he had noticed the shadow of two feet belonging to some one in the next room. He tore open the iron-bound door with a jerk and caught Saint-Vallier in the act of listening.

"By heaven!" he shouted, "such insolence as this deserves the axe!"

"Your Majesty," replied the Count proudly, "I would rather have the axe applied to my head than a pair of horns."

"Lucky if you are not favored with both! Not one of you is exempt from either of those weaknesses, gentlemen. Withdraw into the next room. Conyngham," the King went on, addressing the captain of his Scottish guard, "you were asleep. Where is Montresor? You dare to allow me to be molested in this way? Pasques Dieu, the meanest citizen in Tours is better served than I am!"

After administering this scolding he went back into his room, taking the precaution to draw the heavy tapestry curtain which constituted an inner door, intended less for keeping out draughts than for deadening the sound of conversation.

"So, my little girl," her royal father resumed, enjoying teasing her as a cat plays with a mouse it has caught, "your gallant yesterday was Georges d'Estouteville?"

"Oh, no, Sire!"

"No? Now, by Saint Carpion, he does merit death! My daughter was not handsome enough for the rascal!"

"Oh, if that is all, I can assure you he kissed my hands and feet ardently enough to have melted a nun. But he loves me with all honor and respect."

"Tell me no such tales as that! Would a fine youngster like him risk his life for the sake of kissing your slippers and your sleeves? Tut, tut!"

"Indeed, Sire, he did. But he had another motive in coming. My husband—"

Here Marie feared she would incriminate her cruel spouse, for she stopped short when Louis XI. asked sharply—

"Which was?"

The incident was amusing him immensely, but that sensation was mingled with another when, after stipulating for her husband's pardon, the Countess finally told the king about her married life.

"Oh, Monsieur de Saint-Vallier, so this is how you treat royal blood!" exclaimed the monarch, his eyes aflame with anger.

At that moment the bell of Le Plessis rang out the royal dinner hour. Leaning on his daughter's arm Louis XI. passed into the other room, where he found his household in attendance. He frowned at Saint-Vallier as he thought of the sentence he was about to visit him with. Amid profound silence Tristan's footsteps were heard coming up the grand staircase. He entered and walked up to the King:

"Sire, the business is settled."

"What—is it all over?"

"Our man is in the priest's hands. He confessed the theft after a minute on the rack."

The Countess uttered a sigh and turned white, and mutely gazed at the king. Her look was intercepted by Saint-Vallier, who said in a low tone:

"I am betrayed. My wife knows the thief!"

"Silence!" cried the King. "There is some one here of whom I am growing tired." And speaking to the Grand Provost, "Stop the execution at once. You will answer for the prisoner's life with your own. This affair wants sifting a little more; I will look into it myself. Set the accused free provisionally. I shall know where to find him. These thieves all have their favorite resorts and hiding-places. Tell Cornelius I am going to his house this very evening to open the investigation. Monsieur de Saint-Vallier," glaring at the Count, "I know of your proceedings, and, by Our Lady of Clery, you are guilty of high treason! Did I give you this lovely wife to be made pale and miserable? Home with you, sir, and make ready for a long journey! You will start this evening to charge yourself with my interests in Venice. Be not uneasy, I will take care of your wife at Le Plessis to-night. She will be safe there, I know, and I shall henceforth give her closer attention than I have since your marriage."

Marie quietly pressed her father's arm, as if to thank him for his happy inspiration and his clemency. Louis XI. was laughing in his sleeve.

Louis XI. dearly loved interfering in his subjects' concerns, and liked to mix his royal majesty with the plain people. His taste in this direction, though greatly censured by historians, was merely the passion for the *incognito*, one of the special pleasures of princes, a kind of temporary abdication which allows them to infuse a little humanity into their exalted and somewhat insipid lives. But Louis XI. played at *incognito* openly. At such times he was hail-fellow-well-met, and tried to gain the good graces of the plebeians, whom he had secured as allies against the feudal lords. It was long since he had had an opportunity of doing the popular, and espousing the cause of some burgess in trouble with the law, so that he entered heart and soul into Master Cornelius's complaint and his daughter's secret griefs. During dinner he said to her several times:

"But who can have robbed my uncle? He has lost more than twelve hundred thousand crowns' worth within eight years. Twelve hundred thousand crowns, gentlemen," he repeated, looking round at the nobles in waiting. By Our Lady, one might buy a mountain of absolutions for the money in Rome!"

Dinner ended, Louis XI. took his daughter, his physician, the Provost, and a military escort, and repaired to the Hotel de Poitiers, where, in accordance with his own premonitions, he found the Count Saint-Vallier still present, waiting for his wife and possibly intending to get rid of her.

"Monsieur," remarked the King, "I desired you to make a speedy departure. Bid your wife good-by and proceed to the frontier. You will have an escort of honor. Your instructions and credentials will be in Venice before you."

Louis XI. gave orders, not without additional secret injunctions, to a lieutenant of the Scottish Guard, who was to accompany his ambassador as far as Venice with a troop of horsemen. Saint-Vallier set out immediately, after bestowing a frigid embrace on his wife, which he would have been pleased to render deadly. When the Countess had retired, Louis went to the House of Evil, most anxious to unravel the ugly farce playing in the establishment of his "uncle," and flattering himself that a king would surely be clever enough to unearth the thieves. It was not without some apprehension that Cornelius saw his master's train of followers.

"Are all those people to take a part in the performance?" he asked his sovereign, aside.

The King could not help smiling at the usurer's alarm and his sister's.

"No, uncle," he replied, "do not be uneasy. They are to sup with us at my house, and we shall investigate by ourselves. I am such a good lawyer that I am ready to wager ten thousand crowns I find the culprit."

"Let us find him, Sire, and let us make no wager."

They then went to the closet where the goldsmith's treasures were stored. There Louis XI., having been shown the case formerly containing the Elector of Bavaria's jewels, and then the chimney through which the robber was supposed to have entered the place, easily convinced the Fleming that his suspicions were erroneous. No soot had fallen into the hearth, there was no sign whatever inside the flue, and the chimney stood on an almost inaccessible part of the roof. No evidence of violence was to be seen on any of the locks, nor the iron coffers holding the miser's cash and the valuables in pledge from wealthy borrowers. The search, which continued for two hours, and which exemplified the King's wily methods, demonstrated conclusively that nobody could have gained access to the treasure chamber. Said his Majesty—

"If the rogue opened this case why did he only take the Bavarian jewels? Why did he leave the pearl necklace? A strange thief, to be sure!"

Cornelius blanched at this, and he and the King eyed one another for a moment.

"Well, then, what was the thief doing here whom you took under your protection, and who was out during the night?" asked Hoogworst.

"If you have not guessed, uncle, I order you never to do so. It is a secret of mine."

"Then the devil is in my house!"

Under any other circumstances the King would have laughed at his banker's lament, but he had become very grave, and was penetrating, as it were, Cornelius's brain with his piercing gaze. The Brabanter, thinking he had offended his redoubtable master, grew frightened.

"Angel or devil, I have the malefactor!" suddenly cried the royal detective. "If you are robbed again to-night I shall know to-morrow who did the deed. Send up the old hag you call your sister."

Cornelius almost hesitated to leave the King alone in a room with his treasure. But he went, coerced by the bitter smile on the King's faded lips. He soon returned, followed by the old woman.

"Have you any flour?" asked Louis.

"Certainly. We have laid in our stock for the winter."

"Well, then, bring it here."

"But what do you want to do with our flour?" cried she in alarm, and in nowise overawed by the royal majesty—like all individuals possessed by a ruling passion.

"Obey our gracious master's command, you old fool!" exclaimed her brother. "Is the king to be wanting for some flour?"

"Then buy some!" she grumbled on the stairs. "Oh! my lovely flour!"

Returning, she said to the King:

"Is this a royal idea, Sire, this testing of my flour?"

At length she reappeared with one of the linen bags used from time immemorial in Touraine for carrying nuts, fruit, and corn to or from market. The bag was half full of flour, and the housekeeper opened it and timidly held it up to the King, shooting a swift venomous old maid's glance at him.

"It cost six sous the measure," she observed.

"What do I care?" ejaculated the king. "Pour it out over the floor! Above all be careful to spread it quite evenly, as if snow had fallen."

She did not understand. The proposition astonished her more than the end of the world would have done.

"My flour—on the ground—Sire—?"

Cornelius, on whom the King's intention was remotely dawning, seized the bag and emptied the flour on the floor. The old woman shuddered, but held out her hand for the bag, going off with a deep sigh when her brother surrendered it. Cornelius took a feather brush, and began distributing the flour from the door of the closet, so that it lay like a sheet of snow. He stepped backward during the operation, which was followed by the King with intense amusement. Upon completion of the task, Louis inquired:

"Uncle, are there two keys to the lock?"

"No, Sire."

The King then examined the structure of the door, which was fortified by heavy iron plates and bars. All the parts of this armature were connected with a lock to which only Cornelius had a key. After a thorough scrutiny Louis sent for Tristan, ordering him to post some of his men-at-arms secretly in the mulberry trees of the avenue and on the neighboring housetops, and to call his escort together for the purpose of returning to Le Plessis. This with the object of making believe he was not going to sup with Master Cornelius. He bade the miser darken the windows, so that not a ray of light should be seen from the street, and prepare a light meal, so as to give no hint that the King would spend the night there. The King went off in state by the embankment, and came back quietly by the rampart gate to his friend's house. Everything was so well arranged that neighbors, townsfolk and courtiers thought the King had capriciously returned to Le Plessis and would go back to supper at the goldsmith's the next night.

By eight o'clock Louis XI. was merrily carousing with his physician, the captain of his Scottish guard, and Cornelius, forgetting he was a King sick unto death, and indulging in jovial talk. Deepest silence reigned outside, and a passer-by—or even a thief—would have supposed the House of Evil tenantless.

"I hope," said the King, "that my uncle will be robbed to-night, so that my curiosity may be satisfied. To-morrow, gentlemen, none of you leaves his room without permission, under pain of my extreme displeasure."

Upon which they all retired for the night.

The next morning Louis XI. was the first to come out of his room, and at once made for the treasury, but was not a little surprised at finding the print of a large foot through the corridors and on the stairs. Carefully walking round the precious marks he went to the door of the closet, which proved to be intact. He studied the course of the footsteps, but as they gradually grew fainter, and finally left no impression, it was impossible to say in what direction the thief had flown.

"Now, uncle!" cried the King to Cornelius, "you have been most exquisitely robbed!"

At this the old Brabanter stepped forth, a prey to evident horror. Louis XI. showed him the footprints on the boards, and while examining them once more accidentally perceived that the sole of the miser's slipper corresponded to the shape so numerously in evidence on the floor. He said nothing, and checked a laugh as he remembered how many innocent men had been hanged. The miser went directly to the treasure chamber. Requiring him to make a fresh mark with his foot beside those already existing, the King convinced Cornelius that the robber was none other than himself.

"The pearl necklace is gone!" shrieked the miser. "There is sorcery at work! I never quitted my room!"

"We shall know about that very soon," said the King, made pensive by his banker's obvious good faith. He sent for the soldiers who had been on the watch, and asked them:

"Tell me, what have you seen this night?"

"A piece of witchcraft, your Majesty," replied the lieutenant. "Your goldsmith came along down by the walls like a cat, and so quietly that at first we thought it was a ghost."

"I?" cried Cornelius, who after that single word stood mute, as if rooted to the ground.

"Away with you, you others," said the King to the men-at-arms, "and tell Conyngham, Coyctier, Montresor, and Tristan they may get out of bed and come here. You have incurred the pain of death," he coldly addressed the Fleming, who luckily did not hear; "you have ten at least on your conscience!"

Here the King smiled grimly and paused.

"But be comforted," he resumed, seeing the mortal pallor that was overspreading the usurer's countenance; "it is better to bleed than to kill you. In consideration of a handsome fine, for the benefit of my purse, you shall escape the fangs of the law, but if you do not build at least one chapel in honor of the Virgin you will run the hazard of a warm eternity."

"Twelve hundred and thirty thousand and eighty-seven thousand crowns make thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns," mechanically ejaculated the banker, absorbed in calculation. "Thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns gone!"

"He must have buried them in some hole," was the King's comment. He was beginning to think the sum a royal one.

Coyctier now appeared on the scene, and watched Cornelius narrowly while his master related the affair.

"Sire," answered the doctor, "there is nothing supernatural in all this. Your goldsmith has the peculiarity of walking in his sleep. His is the third case I have met with of this singular disease. If you would be pleased to witness its effects you might see this old gentleman walk the edge of the roofs unimperilled any night that he is seized with an attack. In the two other patients I spoke of I noticed a curiously close relation between their nocturnal exploits and their pursuits during the daytime."

"Master Coyctier, you are a wise man!"

"Am I not your Majesty's physician?" was the insolent response.

By way of rejoinder Louis XI. made a gesture familiar to those surrounding him as one of approving a good idea: he pushed back his cap quickly.

"In these instances," Coyctier went on, "men transact their business in their sleep. As this person is not averse to hoarding, he has no doubt practiced his favorite occupation at that time. He must also have had attacks during the day whenever he thought his treasure threatened."

"Pasques Dieu! And such a treasure!"

"Where is it?" asked Cornelius, who by a strange freak of our human nature heard all that passed between king and physician, although almost overcome by his reflections and his misfortune.

"Oh," remarked Coyctier with a coarse, diabolical laugh, "somnambulists remember none of their actions when they wake."

"Leave us alone!" said the King.

Alone with his banker, Louis XI. looked at him with a cold chuckle.

"Master Hoogworst," he mocked him with a bow, "all treasure-trove in France belongs to the King."

"Yes, Sire, everything is yours, and you are absolute master of our lives and fortunes, but up to the present you have graciously contented yourself with not going beyond your actual wants."

"Listen, uncle; if I help you to recover this treasure you may share it with me without fear!"

"No, Sire, I do not want to share it with you, but I want to leave you the whole of it when I die. However, what was your scqeme?"

"I should simply have to watch you during your nocturnal excursions. It would not do to trust any one else."

"Your Majesty," answered Cornelius, falling at his sovereign's feet, "is the only man in the country I would trust in this, and I will show my gratitude by furthering the marriage of the heiress of Burgundy with His Royal Highness the Dauphin. There is a treasure, to be sure, not in money but in good lands which will round off your domains handsomely."

"Now, Fleming, you are playing me false," frowned the King, "or else you have been an unfaithful servant."

"How can your Majesty doubt my fidelity, you who are the only man I love!"

"Words, words! You ought not to have waited till now to make yourself useful. Selling me your patronage, are you? Pasques Dieu! Selling it to me—Louis XI.! Are you master now, and am I the servant—?"

"God forbid, Sire; I merely wanted to hint at agreeable news I had received from Ghent, which was to have been confirmed by Oosterlinck's apprentice. But what have you done with him?"

"Enough! This is another fault of yours. I do not like people to interfere in my affairs unasked. Enough! I will consider all this."

Cornelius flew to the lower room, where his sister was, with the agility of youth.

"Jeanne, my dear love," he exclaimed, "we have a hoard in this house with our thirteen hundred thousand crowns, and it is I, I myself, who am the thief!"

Jeanne Hoogworst got up from her stool, starting to her feet as though she had been sitting on red-hot iron. The shock was so violent to an old woman who for years had made a habit of voluntary starvation, that she trembled in all her limbs and felt a terrible pain in her back. She grew paler and paler, and her face seemed to decompose, as it were, while her brother explained his strange malady and the curious situation they were placed in.

"Louis XI. and I," he said, "have just been lying to each other like Turks. You see, my love, if he were to watch me he would be sole master of the knowledge of the hidden treasure. I am not sure whether the king's conscience, near death as he is, could argue with thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns. We must forestall him, find our gold-finches, and despatch everything to Ghent. No one but you—"

Cornelius stopped, as though weighing the mind of this King, who at twenty-two had thought of parricide. When he had come to a conclusion he rose abruptly, like a man about to run away from danger. At this sudden movement his sister, enfeebled by age and her spare diet, collapsed under the moral strain and fell down lifeless. Cornelius shook his sister violently, saying:

"This is not the time to die! You will have enough leisure for that afterward! Oh! it is all over! The old woman never did anything right!"

He closed her eyes and laid her on the floor. But the good and generous feelings that were at the bottom of his heart welled up, and half forgetting his money he lamented—

"My poor friend, I have really lost you then; you who understood me so well! It was you who were the treasure! With you depart all my peace of mind and affections! If you had guessed how profitable it would be to live two more nights you would certainly not have died, just to please me, poor soul! Jeanne—listen—thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns! What? That does not wake you up? Alas! she is dead!"

Thereupon he sat down and uttered not another word, but two great tears sprung from his eyes and rolled down his hollow cheeks. He then went back to the King, who was surprised to see his old friend so downcast with sorrow.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"Alas, Sire, misfortunes never come singly. My sister is dead. She has gone below before me," said Cornelius, pointing to the ground in a significant manner.

"No more!" commanded the King, who disliked the mention of death.

"I will make you my heir. I care for nothing now. Here are my keys. Hang me if you wish to. Take everything, turn the house upside down—it is full of gold! I give it all to you!"

"Come, uncle," said the King, somewhat touched by this explosion of grief, "we shall find your property some fine night, and the sight of it will revive your inclination to live. I will come back this week."

"Whenever it may please your majesty!"

At this answer Louis XI., who had gone toward the door, wheeled round, and the two men looked at each other with an expression that neither brush nor pen could possibly portray.

"Good-by, uncle!" said the King finally, in a curt tone, as he straightened his cap.

"May the Almighty and the Holy Virgin ever keep you in Their favor!" humbly responded the goldsmith, bowing the King out.

Thus did these two part, very much embarrassed as to their future behavior to one another.

However, the King imposed no fine on Cornelius, and there was no judicial inquiry, but they both remained on terms of armed neutrality. Luckily for the goldsmith, it was noised about in Tours that his sister was the thief and had been privately executed by Tristan. Otherwise, if the true story had been published, the whole town would have risen in arms to destroy the House of Evil without giving the King time to intervene. But even if these historical suppositions at all account for Louis's inaction, the case was quite different so far as Master Cornelius Hoogworst was concerned.

The first few days following on the fatal morning he spent in direst unrest. Like a caged wild animal, he went back and forth, up and down, sniffing gold in every corner, testing every cranny and crevice, searching for it in the walls, calling out for it to the very trees in the garden, rummaging cellar and roof, tower and turret, scouring the earth and the heavens. Often he would stand for hours and stare at everything all round him, space included. He was forever lost in one great, overwhelming idea, devoured by a wish that was searing away his soul. His love of gold was its own punishment, and was developing into a sort of uncompleted suicide that involved the pangs of both life and death. The miser who shuts himself up with his treasures in a subterranean cell at least has the satisfaction, like Sardanapalus, of dying surrounded by his accumulated riches. But Cornelius, at once the robber and the robbed, owned and yet did not own his wealth—a new and weird form of torture, but none the less agonizing. In fits of entire mental abstraction he would leave his little wicket door open, and the passers-by might see the old man, now rapidly declining, standing motionless in the middle of his neglected garden; upon those who stopped to look at him he would fix a fiendish glare that froze them to the marrow. If he chanced to walk abroad in the streets of Tours he behaved like a stranger: he never knew where he was, nor whether it was the sun or the moon that was shining. He often asked his way of people he met, thinking he was in Ghent, and he seemed always to be hunting for his lost jewels and gold. Besides the torment of the perpetual search, fear came over him with all its horrors. For he knew that two men were aware of his secret—of which he himself was ignorant: Louis XI. and Coyctier could post men to watch his movements during sleep, and thus discover the gulf which had swallowed all the wealth tainted with innocent blood. To insure the safety of the lost treasure during his lifetime, he, in the early days following the catastrophe, took the most stringent precautions against sleep; his commercial connections facilitated the purchase of powerful anti-narcotics. His nights of artificial waking were fraught with many terrors. He was alone with the darkness, and silence, and remorse, and fear, and all the thoughts and sensations of man that are most appalling.

At last this man, hardened though he was by a life of deceitful dealing, succumbed to his self-created inflictions. Assailed one day by thoughts more dreadful than usual, he cut his throat with a razor.

His death almost coincided with that of Louis XI., so that the House of Evil was sacked by the populace. Some of the old residents of Touraine asserted that the miser's treasure was unearthed by a tax farmer called Bohier, and was by him employed in building the foundations of Chenonceaux—a wonderfully fine castle, which, in spite of having the fortunes of several kings expended on it, as well as the admirable taste of Diane de Poitiers and her rival, Catherine de' Medici, has never been finished.

Happily for Marie de Sassenage, the Count Saint-Vallier died, as is well known, during his ambassadorial mission to Venice. His line did not die out. After her husband's departure the Countess gave birth to a son, famous in French history under Francis I. His life was saved by his daughter, the noted Diane de Poitiers. This woman was an illegitimate great-granddaughter of Louis XI. and became the mistress of Henri II. For in that noble family illicit love was hereditary!

VENETIAN NIGHTS

AS ALL WELL INFORMED people know, the Venetian nobility is the first in Europe. Its golden book antedates the Crusades, at which time Venice, an offshoot of Imperial and Christian Rome, which plunged into the waters to escape the Barbarians, was already powerful and famous, and ruled the political and commercial world. With a few exceptions, that nobility is now completely ruined. Among the gondoliers who conduct the English about the city, there are sons of Doges whose ancestral line is longer than that of many sovereigns. On some bridge under which your gondola passes, if you ever go to Venice, you will probably admire some raggedly dressed little girl with a lovely face, who belongs perhaps to one of the most illustrious patrician races. But it is quite natural that strange characters should be found among a people of kings. It is not extraordinary that occasionally a flame should shoot from the ashes.

As these reflections are only given here to justify the strange people who are to act the principal parts in this story, they will go no further; for there is nothing so insupportable as reminiscences of Venice after so many great poets and little travellers. But the interest of the story demands that one of the greatest contrasts in human existence should be set forth—the pride and poverty which is seen there in certain men as it is in most of the houses.

The nobles of Genoa and Venice, like those of Poland, had no titles. To call one's self Quirini, Doria, or Spinola was the highest distinction possible. But everything becomes corrupted, and some of the families now have titles. Nevertheless, in the days when the nobles of the aristocratic republics were equal, there existed in Genoa the title of prince for the Doria family, who had sovereign rights over Amalfi, and a similar title at Venice was justified by a possession inherited from Facino Cane, Prince of Varese. The Grimaldi, who became sovereigns, took possession of Monaco much later. The last Cane of the senior branch disappeared from Venice thirty years before the fall of the republic, condemned for an offence of more or less criminality. Those who inherited that nominal principality, the Cane Memmi, fell into poverty during the fatal period of 1796 to 1814. In the twentieth year of this century their sole representatives were a young man named Emilio and a palace which is considered one of the most beautiful on the Grand Canal. The entire fortune of that child of beautiful Venice consisted in his useless palace and an income of fifteen hundred francs from a country house on the Brenta, the last remnant of the family estates, which had been sold to the Austrian Government. That trifling income saved Emilio from the ignominy of receiving, as many noblemen did in those days, a pension of one franc per day, which was stipulated in the treaty with the Austrians.

Though it was the beginning of winter this young lord was still at the country residence of the Duchess Cataneo, situated at the foot of the Tyrolean Alps. It had been built by Palladio for the Piepolo family, and consisted of a square pavilion of the purest type of architecture and a grand staircase with marble porticos on either hand. Over the arched entrance exquisite figures were carved, which were of large size but so well proportioned that the edifice bore them as a woman carries her headdress, with an ease which delights the eye. The whole building had that graceful elegance which distinguishes the buildings on the Piazzetta at Venice. Admirably stuccoed walls lent the apartments a deliciously cool appearance. The frescoed galleries surrounding the building served as a screen against the heat of the sun. The entire flooring was of richly colored Venetian marble. The furniture, like that of most Italian palaces, was profuseiy decorated with fine silks, and on the walls valuable pictures were tastefully hung; some by the Genoese priest known as *il capucino* and several by Leonardo da Vinci, Carlo Dolci, Tintoretto and Titian.

The gardens were rich with marvels of charming caves and grottos, terraces which seemed to have been laid out by fairies, sheltered groves where the tall cypress, the stately pine and the sad olive mingled harmoniously with orange trees, laurels and myrtles, and there were clear ponds in which blue and yellow fishes swam. Whatever might be said in favor of the English gardens with their well groomed and clipped trees; this skilful blending of the artificial and the natural; those cascades rippling over marble steps so gently that they seemed a film of silk blown by the wind; those statues overlooking nature in their majestic silence; that noble palace, from which a splendid view could be obtained from almost every side; the living thoughts which animated the stone, the water and the trees—all that poetic prodigality was fitting for the loves of a Duchess and a handsome young man.

A poet would have almost expected to see on one of those noble stairways, standing by a quaintly ornamented vase, a little negro boy with a crimson sash about his middle, holding in one hand a parasol above the Duchess's head, and in the other the train of her long robe, while she listened to Emilio Memmi. And who would not have preferred to see the young Venetian dressed like one of those senators painted by Titian? But alas! even in this fairy palace, so like the *Peschiere* at Genoa, the Duchess obeyed the dictates of Victorine and the Paris fashions. She wore a muslin dress and a straw hat, pretty shot-silk shoes, stockings so fine that the lightest breath would have blown them away, and over her shoulders a shawl of black lace. But what no one could ever understand in Paris, where women are incased in their dresses like dragon-flies in their armor, was the delicious carelessness with which that beautiful daughter of Tuscany wore her French costume. She had Italianized it.

At about eleven o'clock in the morning, having just returned from a walk, the Duchess Cataneo was reclining on a sofa, near which was spread the remains of an elegant luncheon. Seated on a cushion by her side, Emilio held her hand in his and was lost in its contemplation. Do not ask whether they were lovers; they loved each other too much. They had not read it in a book as Paolo and Francesca had done; far from it, Emilio dared not say: "*Let us read!*" To look at her face gave him an exquisite joy, and the sound of her voice stirred the very roots of his being. Yes, in solitude a woman of even mediocre beauty, if ceaselessly studied, becomes sublime and imposing. Perhaps the magnificent beauty of the Duchess had stupefied this young man who was so prone to fits of exaltation; for she certainly had complete possession of his young heart.

Heiress of the Doni of Florence, Massimilla had married the Sicilian Duke Cataneo. It was by means of this marriage that her old mother, since dead, had wished to make her rich and happy. She had thought that when her daughter left the convent for the world she would naturally enter into that second marriage of the heart which is everything to an Italian; but the convent had instilled into Massimilla many religious ideas, so that when she plighted herself before the altar to the Duke of Cataneo she considered it her duty to be a faithful wife to him. But that was almost impossible. Catanco, who had only wanted a duchess, found being a husband quite a nuisance. When Massimilla expostulated with him about his conduct he coolly told her that she might look about for an agreeable escort, and even offered her his services to that end. The Duchess wept and the Duke left her. Massimilla observed the society about her, was taken by her mother to Pergola, to the Cascine and to all the best houses—in short, she went wherever young and handsome cavaliers were likely to be found; but none pleased her. Then she began to travel. Her mother died and left her a fortune. She went into mourning, came to Venice and there saw Emilio, who, as he was passing in front of her box, had exchanged glances with her. That was enough. The Venetian lost his heart on the spot; while a voice whispered to Massimilla: "*That is he!*" Two young people of any other nationality would have thought about the matter a while, but these two ignoramuses were attracted to each other like two substances of the same nature which become one by contact. Massimilla immediately resolved to remain in Venice; so she bought the palace which she had leased on the Canareggio. Then, not knowing how to employ her income, she also purchased Rivalta, the country place which we have already described.

Emilio, presented to the Duchess by Madame Vulpato, often visited her box during the season. Never was love more violent in its nature or more timid in its expression. The two children trembled before each other. Massimilla was not a coquette. She admired her young Venetian with his oval face, his long, aquiline nose, his black eyes and his noble forehead, who in spite of her artless encouragement had been so backward in his advances. The heat of the summer became oppressive and the Duchess complained of having to go alone to Rivalta. So, at once happy and uneasy at the prospect before him, Emilio had accompanied Massimilla to her retreat. The handsome young nobleman had been there now some six months.

Though twenty years old, Massimilla would not have sacrificed her religious scruples to love without great remorse; but she was gradually allowing herself to be disarmed, and she was hoping soon to perfect that marriage of the heart which was so much lauded by her mother, at the moment when Emilio was holding her white and slender hand with its beautifully chiselled and tinted nails.

A servant arrived with a letter for the young Venetian. Marco Vendramini—a name which in the Venetian dialect is generally pronounced Vendramin—his best friend, had written to tell him that Marco Facino Cane, Prince of Varese, had died in a Paris hospital. The death certificate had been seen. So that the Cane Memmi became Prince of Varese. In the eyes of the two friends a title without money meant nothing. Vendramini further announced to Emilio an item of much greater importance; namely, the engagement at the Fenice of Genovese the famous tenor and the celebrated Signora Tinti. Without waiting to finish the letter, which he folded and put into his pocket, Emilio turned to the Duchess and told her the great news, quite forgetting to mention his new title.

The Duchess was ignorant of the singular history which had made La Tinti talked about all over Italy, and the Prince enlightened her in a few words. This famous singer had been a waitress at an inn, and her marvellous voice had delighted a great Sicilian nobleman who happened to be passing the night there. The beauty of the girl, who was then only twelve years old, being as remarkable as her voice, the nobleman brought her up, as Louis XV. in former times had educated Mademoiselle de Romans. He had waited patiently until Clara's voice had been trained by a famous master, and she herself had reached the age of sixteen years before allowing her to make use of her laboriously cultivated gifts. When she came out the year before La Tinti had taken by storm the three Italian cities most difficult to please.

And so it came about that on one lovely evening in November the newly created Prince of Varese was crossing the lagoon from Mestre to Venice, between the line of stakes painted with the Austrian colors which marks the channel for the use of gondolas. With his eyes fixed upon the Duchess's gondola, which was propelled by men in livery, cleaving the water in front of him, poor Emilio, whose gondola was rowed by an old gondolier who had served his father in the days when Venice was still in its glory, could not repress the bitter thoughts which his new title suggested to him.

"What a mockery! to be Prince with an income of 1,500 francs. To possess one of the finest palaces in the world and not to be able to dispose of a few paintings and statues, which an Austrian decree have made inalienable! To live on a flooring of precious wood, estimated to be worth in the neighborhood of a million, and not to have enough furniture! To be the master of sumptuous galleries and inhabit a room done in the finest arabesque style with marbles brought from the Morea, which a Memmi had overrun with a conquering army in the time of the Romans! To see in one of the finest churches in Venice the figures of his ancestors sculptured on their tombs in precious marbles in the midst of a chapel hung with pictures by Titian, Tintoretto, the two Palmas, de Bellini and Paul Veronese, and not to be able to sell England a single statue to buy bread for the Prince of Varese! Genovese, the tenor, received in one season for his runs and trills an amount sufficient to keep a son of the Memmi, Roman Senators, boasting of as ancient lineage as the Cæsars or the Syllas, in comfort for the rest of his days."

Genovese might smoke an Indian hookah, but the Prince of Varese could not even smoke as many cigars as he cared to!

And he threw the stub of his cigar into the water. The Prince of Varese's cigars had been provided by the Duchess, at whose feet he would gladly have laid all the wealth of the world. The Duchess studied his caprices, and was never so happy as when she was indulging them. But to-day he must be content with one meal, for his money would only go far enough to defray the cost of his linen and his admission to the Fenice. Out of his slender income he was obliged to set aside one hundred francs a year for his father's old gondolier, who subsisted on rice in order to serve him for that sum. Besides, it was necessary to have money for the cups of black coffee which he drank every morning at the Café Florian to keep him all day in a state of nervous excitement, from the abuse of which he hoped to die some day, as his friend Vendramin relied upon opium for the same purpose.

"And I am a prince!"

As he pronounced the last word Emilio threw Vendramin's letter, without finishing it, into the waters of the lagoon, where it floated like a paper boat made by a child.

"But," he continued, "Emilio is only twenty-three years old. He is better off than the gouty Duke of Wellington, or the paralyzed Regent, or the diseased Austrian Imperial family, or the King of France. . . ."

As he thought of the King of France, Emilio's brows contracted, his face clouded, and tears welled up in his dark eyes, moistening their long lashes. With a hand which was worthy to be painted by a Titian he brushed aside his thick brown hair and looked again at the Cataneo gondola.

"The irony which rules my fate asserts itself even in my love," he said to himself. "My heart and imagination are full of treasures, yet Massimilla ignores them. She is a Florentine and will probably soon leave me. How can I remain inactive by her side when her voice and look arouse celestial emotions in me! Even now, as I look at her gondola gliding through the water a few yards in front of me, it seems as though a hot iron were being thrust into my heart. An invisible fluid is running through my nerves; a mist is gathering before my eyes; the evening seems to have the enchantment of those crimson sunsets at Rivalta that I used to admire so much. Either my Highness will end with a pistol shot or the sons of the Cane will take old Carmagnola's advice. We shall become sailors and pirates and amuse ourselves speculating on how long we shall live before being hanged."

The Prince lighted another cigar and followed with his eyes the rings of smoke floating away with the breeze, as though he saw in their vanishment an illustration of his last thought. From afar he discerned the towers of his palace and became sad again. The Duchess's gondola had disappeared in the Canareggio. His dreams of a romantic and perilous life as a fit ending to his love died out with his cigar, and the Cataneo gondola no longer marked his path. Then he realized his actual position: A palace without a retinue, a principality without money, an empty body and a full heart—a thousand despairing antitheses. The unhappy young man mourned his old Venice as his friend Vendramin wept for it; for mutual misfortunes had given birth to a strong friendship between these two young men, the last of famous families. Emilio could not help thinking of the days when light blazed from every window of the Memmi palace, the music from which could be heard far out on the Adriatic; when hundreds of gondolas were moored before its landing, which was filled with a throng of masked ladies and dignitaries of the Republic; when its apartments were crowded with a high and mighty assemblage; when the great banquet hall was lined with laughing tables, and its galleries rang with the sound of music; when the whole of Venice seemed to be passing up and down its staircases to the music of echoing laughter. The chisels of the greatest artists for century upon century had sculptured the bronze which supported the quaintly fashioned vases from China and the candelabras of a thousand lights. Every country had furnished its quota of the luxury which enriched its walls and floors. To-day those walls were shorn of their fine stuffs, the gloomy floors were silent and mournful. No more Turkey carpets, no more gorgeous festoons of flowers, no more statues, no more pictures, no more joy—and no more gold, pleasure's great vehicle! Venice, the London of the Middle Ages, was falling into ruin, stone by stone and man by man. The dusty grass which the water lapped and caressed at the foot of the palace seemed in the Count's eyes like a black fringe placed there by nature as a sign of death. And to crown all, a great English poet had descended upon Venice like a vulture upon a corpse, to croak over it in lyric verse—in the first and last language of man, the stanzas of a De profundis! English lyrics thrown in the face of a city which had cradled the poetry of Italy! Poor Venice!

Judge of the astonishment of the young man absorbed in such thoughts when Carmagnola cried out to him—

"Your Highness, either the palace is burning or the ancient Doges have returned. There are lights in the upper windows!"

Prince Emilio thought his dreams were realized by the stroke of some magic wand. As it was nightfall, the old gondolier managed to land his young master without being observed by any of the servants who were hurrying about the palace, some of whom were bustling about the landing like bees at the entrance to a hive.

Emilio slipped into the immense hall, which terminated in the finest staircase in all Venice, and quickly ascended to find out the meaning of the singular transformation. An army of workmen was engaged in furnishing and decorating the palace. The first floor, worthy of the ancient splendor of Venice, spread out before his wondering eyes all the fine things of which he had dreamed a moment since, and the fairy had arranged them in the most perfect good taste. Gorgeousness worthy of the palace of a newly crowned king was apparent in its smallest details. Emilio walked about without any one paying the slightest attention to him, and he was greeted with surprise upon surprise. Curious to see what was happening on the second floor, he went upstairs, and there found the furnishings complete.

He arrived at his bedchamber, which smiled on him like the shell whence Venice had come forth. The room was so deliciously beautiful, so dainty, so coquettish and full of such refined comforts that he straightway sat himself down before a table inlaid with gold upon which was spread an appetizing supper, and without further ado began to eat.

"Surely no one but Massimilla could have had the idea of this surprise. The Duke of Cataneo is dead perhaps and has left her all his property, so that she is now twice as rich as she was. She will marry me, and . . ."

And he ate in a manner that would have made a sickly millionnaire gnash his teeth with jealous rage, and he drank the excellent Porto wine in torrents.

"Now I can explain her mysterious manner when she said, 'I shall see you this evening!' She is probably coming to disenchant me."

In certain sensitive organisms extreme joy or sorrow produces a soporific effect; and in Emilio's case the sudden discovery of what he thought was a turn of fortune in his favor produced the same effect as a dose of opium would have done. After the Prince had drunk the bottle of wine, eaten half a salmon and a quantity of French pastry, he began to feel sleepy. Perhaps he was under the influence of a double intoxication. He turned back the counterpane, undressed and went to bed to reflect on his good fortune.

"I forgot about poor Carmagnola, but my cook and footman will surely attend to him."

At that moment a chambermaid entered the room, gayly singing an air from the "Barber of Seville." She threw on the bed some articles of feminine apparel with the words—

"So here they come at last!"

And sure enough, not many seconds passed before a young woman, dressed in French style, but who might have been taken for the original of a fancy English engraving, flounced into the room.

This young woman was accompanied by one of those fantastic personages of whom no one will believe when they are taken from real life to adorn the pages of a description more or less literary. Like that of the Neapolitans, the stranger's costume consisted of five colors, if the black of the hat could be considered as a color. His trousers were olive, his red waistcoat shone with gold buttons, his coat was a shade of green, and his linen was more yellow than anything else. This man seemed to have taken pains to justify the Neapolitan that Gerolamo always presents in his marionette theatre. His eyes seemed to be of glass. His nose, which was shaped like an ace of clubs, was horribly prominent and almost covered the opening which it would have been a mistake to call a mouth, through which could be seen three or four huge yellow teeth. The large ears drooped under their own weight, and gave the man an uncanny, doglike appearance. His complexion was very dark. His pointed skull was bald except for a few stray hairs, which fell over his wrinkled forehead like filaments of blown glass, and surmounted an ill-tempered countenance.

Finally, although thin and of ordinary height, he had immensely long arms and broad shoulders. In spite of all these horrors, and although he would have been taken for seventy years old, he did not lack a certain Cyclopean majesty; his manners were aristocratic and his look was haughty. Enormously wealthy from his boyhood, he had early in life sold his body to debauchery for the pleasures of the flesh. Debauchery had destroyed the human creature and made another in its own image. Thousands of bottles of wine had passed under the purple arches of that hideous nose, leaving their dregs on his lips. Continuous indigestion had ruined his health. His eyes had been dimmed at the gaming tables. His blood was filled with impurities which had destroyed the nervous system. Excessive use of his digestive organs had stifled his intellect. Like an impatient heir, each vice had made its mark on the still living body.

"Are you going to play the violin this evening, my dear Duke?" the woman asked, as she unhooked a magnificent curtain which fell over the doorway.

"Play the violin," said the Prince to himself, "what does that mean? Does not this palace belong to me? Am I dreaming? Have I, like Vendramin, been smoking opium, and am I revelling in one of those dreams in which he sees Venice as she was three hundred years ago?"

Seated before the mirror, illuminated with candles, the stranger made her toilet as though she were at home.

"Ring for Julia; I wish her to arrange my hair."

The Duke suddenly perceived the remains of the supper, and when he looked about the room he saw the Prince's clothes on a chair beside the bed.

"I will not ring, Clarina," cried the now infuriated Duke. "I will play the violin neither to-night nor ever again . . ."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta," sang Clarina on a single note, passing from octave to octave with the ease of a nightingale.

"In spite of that voice which would make your patron Saint Claire jealous, you are much too impudent, Madame Impertinence."

"You did not bring me up to listen to such words," said she haughtily.

"Did I teach you to hide a man in your room? You are equally unworthy of my kindness or my scorn."

"A man in my room!" cried Clarina, turning quickly.

"And who has coolly eaten our supper as if he owned the place," continued the Duke.

"What!" cried Emilio, "is not this my palace? Am I not Prince of Varese?"

As he uttered these words he sat up, and his fine Venetian head emerged from the pompous draperies of the bed.

At first Clarina was seized with one of those silly fits of laughter which take hold of children whenever they see something unusually comic. But she ceased laughing when she noticed how exceedingly handsome Emilio was.

"If this is the Memmi Palace, your Serene Highness must leave, nevertheless," said the Duke in the cold and ironical manner of a man of the world. "I am at present occupying it. . . ."

"You must know, Duke, that you are in *my* room and not in yours," interrupted Clarina, awaking from her lethargy. "Do you understand me? And if you do not leave this instant, this young prince will return you the million you have spent on me."

As the old Duke seemed to object to this command, which was given in an attitude worthy of the role of Semiramis, which had earned La Tinti a great reputation, the prima donna took hold of him and pushed him out of the room.

"If you do not leave me in peace this evening you will never see me again, and my 'never' is worth more than yours."

The Duke left and the Sicilian returned to Emilio.

"A prince, poor, young and handsome!" said she. "It is quite a fairy story!"

But Emilio took up his clothes and ran into the anteroom, where he hastily dressed himself, came out again and made for the door. This is what he had said to himself:

"Massimilla, fair daughter of the Doni, in whom the beauty of Italy is personified; rival of the portrait of Margherita, one of the rare gems which Rafael painted for his fame alone! my beautiful and saintly mistress, would I deserve your love if I succumbed to this torrent of flowers? Would I be worthy of thee if I profaned a heart which is wholly thine? No! I will not fall into the trap my senses have laid for me! This girl may have her Duke; the Duchess is mine!"

Just as he was raising the curtain over the doorway he heard a sob. The heroic lover turned and saw La Tinti, who had thrown herself upon the bed and was choking with sobs.

"Can you explain to me," said the Prince, "how you come to be in my palace? How poor Emilio Memmi—?"

"Emilio Memmi!" cried La Tinti, rising to her feet. "You said you were a Prince."

"A prince since yesterday."

"You love the Duchess Cataneo!" said she.

What could poor Emilio say when he saw the prima donna smiling through her tears?

"Your Highness evidently is ignorant of the fact that the nobleman who educated me for the stage—that this Duke—is Cataneo himself; and your friend Vendramin, thinking he was doing you a favor, leased to him this palace for a thousand crowns, for the term of my engagement at the Fenice. Dear idol of my desire," she continued, taking his hand and drawing him toward her, "why do you fly from me, for whom many men would give their fortunes? Do you not understand that love is always love; it is the same everywhere. It is the sun of our hearts, which warms wherever it shines, and here it is high noon. Am I not gloriously beautiful?"

Emilio decided to remain. La Tinti was beside herself with joy.

At that moment Carmagnola gave a loud whistle.

"What can he want of me?" the Prince asked himself. But, conquered by love, he heard Carmagnola's repeated whistling no more.

If you have never travelled through Switzerland you will probably read this description with pleasure; and if you have climbed over the Alps you will not recall the scenery without emotion.

In that glorious country, through a chasm as wide as the Avenue de Neuilly in Paris, but a hundred fathoms deep, rushes a torrent from some dizzy heights of the Simplon or St. Gothard, which has formed a large pool, inclosed by huge rocks of granite on which may be seen the green of pastures, interspersed with firs and gigantic elms. Occasionally a cottage is passed, at the window of which you may sometimes see the rosy face of a blond Swiss maiden. According to the state of the sky this pool is blue or green, but blue as the sapphire and green as the emerald. Well, nothing in the world can convey to the passing traveller such an idea of depth, peace, immensity, heavenly love and eternal joy as that liquid diamond into which the snow from the highest Alps melts. The driver cracks his whip! you turn the corner of a rock and cross a bridge. Suddenly there is a terrific uproar. A great mass of water is breaking into a hundred falls against an enormous rock which blocks the valley.

If you have read this description carefully, you will have seen in the silent pool an image of Emilio's love for the Duchess, and in the crashing waterfalls his passion for La Tinti. In the midst of those torrents of love stood a rock against which the flood broke.

"What does the Duke play on his violin?" Emilio asked. "Do I owe this symphony to him?"

"Dear child"—for she had seen that the Prince was but a child—"dear child," said she, "that man, who is one hundred and eighteen years old in vice and forty-seven on the Church register, has but one pleasure remaining to him. Yes, all his capacity for joy is in ruin; soul, intellect, heart, nerves—everything which elevates man and draws him nearer Paradise by the impulse of some fiery emotion is centred in music; but he is not so much enraptured by music itself as by a single one of its effects—the perfect unison of two voices, or of a voice and a note of his violin. The old monkey sits down by my side and takes his violin—for he plays quite well—and draws the bow across the strings. I try to follow, and, when the long-sought moment arrives when it is impossible to distinguish between the sound of the violin and my own voice, the old man falls into an ecstasy; his dimmed eyes dart their last fire; he is happy; he rolls on the floor like a drunken man. That is why he pays Genovese so much. Genovese is the only tenor who is ever able to bring his voice into perfect unison with mine. Either such is really the case or the Duke imagines it, but he has engaged Genovese for that purpose. Genovese belongs to him. No manager can make that tenor sing without me or make me sing without him. The Duke has brought me up to satisfy this caprice; I owe him my talent, my beauty, and undoubtedly my fortune. He will die in some attack of perfect unison. The sense of hearing is the only one which has survived the shipwreck of his faculties; it is the thread which holds him to life. On this rotten support he rests all his hopes. They say that many men are in a like state. God help them! You have not reached that condition yet!"

Toward morning Prince Emilio found Carmagnola asleep across the doorway.

"Your Highness," said the gondolier, "the Duchess gave me this note for you."

He handed his master a dainty little piece of paper, folded into a triangle. The Prince was so overcome with emotion that he could hardly see and his hands trembled. This is what he read:

"DEAR EMILIO—Your gondola is moored before your palace. You do not know then that Cataneo has rented it for La Tinti. If you love me, go this evening to your friend Vendramin, who has prepared you an apartment in his lodgings. What can I do? Remain in Venice with my husband and his singer here? Shall we leave together for Friuli? Answer at once, if it be only to tell me who wrote that letter which you threw into the lagoon."

The handwriting and the scent of the paper awoke a thousand memories in the young Venetian's mind. The boy could not keep back the tears which blinded his eyes, for he was without strength to withstand that dazzling ray of purity.

In her sleep Clarina heard the sound of weeping. She sat up, saw the Prince in an attitude of grief, and flung herself at his feet.

"An answer is awaited," said Carmagnola, raising the curtain.

"Woman, you have ruined my life!" cried Emilio, throwing her from him.

She embraced him with so much passion, imploring a kind look, that Emilio, furious to find himself entangled in the net which he should have avoided, brutally repulsed the singer.

"Never let me see you again, serpent!" he cried.

Then he walked out of the palace and stepped into his gondola.

"Row!" he cried to Carmagnola.

"Where to?" asked the old man.

"Wherever you please."

The gondolier understood his master's humor and conducted him by devious ways to the Canareggio, and stopped before the door of a splendid palace which you will admire when you go to Venice. For no tourist ever failed to stop his gondola before those quaintly ornamented windows, with balconies carved with the finest workmanship; those graceful twisted columns, the stones in which were cut with so capricious a chisel that no two shapes are alike. And how delightful is that doorway, and how mysterious that vaulted archway leading to the staircase! And who would not admire those steps on which art has impressed a carpet which will last as long as Venice itself—as rich as a Turkey rug, but composed of many-colored stones inlaid in white marble! What soft shadows, what silence and what grace! But what a majesty has that old palace in which, to please Emilio and his friend Vendramin, the Duchess had collected an assortment of old Venetian furniture, and in which skilful hands had restored the ceilings! Venice lived again in that palace. One might see rooms decorated in the style of the Middle Ages; flowered designs in gold on a background of color, and gorgeously frescoed ceilings, so rare that there are not two in the Louvre, and that the extravagance of Louis XIV. shrank from introducing such splendors into the Court of Versailles. Everywhere marble, wood and fine stuffs served as material for the finest handiwork.

Emilio opened a carved oaken door, crossed the long gallery which, in all Venetian palaces, extends from one end of the building to the other on every floor, and reached another well-known door which made his heart leap. On seeing him there, a lady attendant came forward and showed him into a little workroom where he found the Duchess on her knees before a Madonna. He had come to confess his sin and ask forgiveness; but the sight of Massimilla praying overwhelmed him. "Nothing in her heart but God and myself!" he thought.

The Duchess rose and held out her hand to him, but he did not take it.

"Then Giambattista did not see you yesterday?" she said.

"No," replied he.

"This misunderstanding has caused me to pass a sleepless night. I feared so much that you would offend the Duke, whose perversity is so well known to me. What possessed Vendramin to let your palace to him?"

"A good genius, Milla, for your Prince is not rich."

Massimilla was so full of confidence and her beauty was so glorious that Emilio felt with despair how utterly unworthy of her he was. Until that day his soul had been wreathed in the most beautiful flowers of sentiment; but now vice had sullied it, and he alone knew his guilt. Massimilla's heart was so pure that she did not dream of her lover being capable of even the thought of unfaithfulness.

As Emilio had not taken her hand the Duchess passed it through the brown locks which had been kissed so recently by La Tinti. Then she noticed his confusion.

"What ails you?" she asked tenderly.

"Until this moment I never knew the depths of my love," Emilio replied.

"Well, dearest, what more can you wish?" she continued.

At these words Emilio's blood rushed to his heart. "What can I have done to make her say that?" he thought.

"Emilio, what was that letter which you threw into the lagoon?"

"It was Vendramin's, which, if I had finished reading it, would have undoubtedly apprised me of the renting of my palace, and thus prevented my meeting with the Duke."

Massimilla turned pale, but Emilio reassured her with a gesture.

"Stay with me all day, and in the evening we can go to the theatre together. We need not go to Friuli, as your presence will undoubtedly help me to support that of Cataneo," she continued.

Although he knew that it would be a continual torture to him, Emilio consented with apparent pleasure.

If anything can convey an idea of the tortures of the damned when they feel themselves unworthy of God's love, is it not the feeling of a young man whose heart is still pure in the presence of a revered mistress, when he carries with him into the sanctuary of his adored one the loathsome atmosphere of vice?

These feelings tinged with sadness the pleasures which the young Venetian enjoyed in his mistress's society. A woman's mind has wonderful aptitudes for sympathizing with the moods of others. It reflects their color; it vibrates with the note sounded by a lover. So the Duchess became thoughtful. The irritating spices which make up the salt of coquetry, in their effect on love, are not to be compared with this sweet harmony of emotions. The efforts of coquetry presume a separation, which, even though but momentary, is displeasing; while this bond of sympathy means a continual fusion of souls. Poor Emilio was touched by the silent comprehension which made the Duchess weep over an unknown sin. In Emilio's eyes there was a tremendous gulf between the saintly affection of this woman and the love of the vivacious and passionate Sicilian girl.

The entire day was spent in the exchange of long looks and deep meditations. Both sounded the depths of their affection and found it infinite, which gave them food for sweet words. Chastity, that goddess who, in a moment of forgetfulness with Love, conceived Coquetry, would have had no reason to cover her face at the sight of the two lovers. Massimilla's greatest pleasure was to hold Emilio's head in her lap and occasionally press her lips to his, but only as a bird dips its beak in the pure water of a spring, timidly looking about to see whether it is observed. Their thoughts developed that kiss as a musician works up a theme, and it produced in them tumultuous and feverish vibrations which overwhelmed them.

Wedded in thought only, these two lovers adored each other in the purest sense—that of two loving souls united in celestial light; a radiant spectacle for those who have risen to the heights of Faith, and rich in such delicious infinities as are contained in the pictures of Rafael, Titian, and Murillo.

The Prince's thoughts soared heavenward as he lay under the soft rays of Massimilla's eyes, with their long, silken lashes, and he lost himself in the infinitude of that ideal libertinage. Massimilla had become one of those celestial virgins seen in dreams, but who vanish at the approach of dawn.

In the evening the two lovers went to the theatre. And such is Italian life; love in the morning, music in the evening, and sleep at night. How much is this existence preferable to that of countries in which every one spends all his time and strength in politics without being able to change the course of events any more than a grain of sand can affect the sea-shore. Liberty in those singular lands consists in disputing about public affairs and wasting time in a thousand patriotic pursuits, among which it would be difficult to pick out the most absurd, and thus degrading the noble and exalted egoism which gives birth to all human greatness.

In Venice, on the other hand, love and its interests, which is real pleasure, takes up the whole time. There, love is so natural a thing that the Duchess was regarded as an extraordinary woman, for every one was convinced of her purity in spite of the violence of Emilio's passion for her. And the women were sincerely sorry for the poor young man, who was considered as a victim of the saintliness of his sweetheart. But no one dared to blame the Duchess; because, in Italy, religion is a power as much venerated as love.

The opening of a season is an event at Venice, as it is in every other Italian capital; so there was not a vacant seat in the Fenice. The five hours of the night which are passed at the theatre play such an important part in Italian life that it may not be out of place to describe this method of spending the time.

In Italy the boxes are arranged differently from those of other countries in this particular. Everywhere else the women wish to be seen, but in Italy they care little to make a spectacle of themselves. Their boxes are oblong in shape and open obliquely on the corridor and auditorium. At each side is a lounge, at the end of which are two chairs, one for the mistress of the box and the other for her companion, if she bring one with her. But this is rare; every woman is too much occupied in her own box to make visits or receive them; and besides they do not usually care to entertain a possible rival. So that an Italian woman reigns alone in her little domain. There mothers are not the slaves of their daughters, nor are daughters embarrassed by the presence of their mothers. Women are not accompanied by parents or children who rebuke, spy upon, or otherwise annoy them. In front the boxes are draped with silk of uniform color and style. From the cornice hang curtains of the same material, which remain closed if the family owning the box is in mourning. With a few exceptions the boxes are not illuminated from within; they derive all their light from the stage, or, in some cases, from a chandelier in the centre of the auditorium, which, in spite of strong protests, has been placed in certain theatres. Nevertheless, the curtains keep the box quite dark, and, from the manner in which they are arranged, in the back of the box it is dark enough to make it difficult to discern what is going on within. These boxes, which hold from eight to ten persons, are upholstered in rich silks; the ceilings are painted with tasteful designs in light colors and the woodwork is done in gold. The only refreshments taken are ices and sherbet, with perhaps a biscuit or two; only middle-class people eat in them. A box is really a valuable piece of personal property; it is worth thirty thousand francs. At Milan the Litta family owns three adjoining boxes.

These facts show the great importance attached to this detail of that butterfly life. Conversation is such an absolute sovereign of that realm that one of our cleverest writers and one of the keenest observers of Italian life, Stendhal, has called it a little drawing-room whose window opens on a theatre. As a matter of fact the music and other stage attractions are purely secondary; the great interest is in the conversations which are carried on, and the gatherings which take place there. The theatre is a convenient meeting-place for an entire society which studies and amuses itself. The men admitted to the box seat themselves on one or other of the lounges in the order of their arrival. The first comer naturally takes the place next the mistress of the box; but, when the two sofas are occupied and another visitor arrives, the first interrupts the conversation, rises and takes his leave. Then they all advance a place, and so it goes on. These trivial conversations, these serious discussions and this light elegance of Italian life could not exist without a general freedom from restraint. The women may be in evening dress or not as they please. They are so much at home that a stranger admitted to their box might call next day at their house.

The traveller does not at first understand this life of intellectual triviality, this sweet do-nothingness embellished by music. A long stay and a fine sense of observation alone can reveal to a foreigner the meaning of Italian life, which so much resembles the clear blue sky under which it is lived. The nobleman cares little about his fortune; he leaves its management to stewards, who rob and ruin him; he has not that taste for politics which would soon bore him; he lives solely for passion and spends his days in its pursuit.

Italian customs, therefore, mean a perpetual enjoyment and the continual study of the best means to attain it, concealed under an apparent apathy. It is a glorious existence, but costly, for in no country are so many men to be met with who have exhausted everything in life.

The Duchess's box was on the lower tier—*pepiano*, as it is called in Venice. She always sat in a position where she was in the full glare of the footlights, so that her beautiful head, well lighted up, stood out against the dark background. The Florentine attracted attention by her high white forehead, crowned by black curls which gave her a truly queenly air, by the refinement of her clear-cut features, which recalled the tender nobility of the heads painted by

Andrea del Sarto, and by her eyes—eyes of velvet which betrayed the happiness of a woman dreaming of bliss, pure even in love.

Instead of "Moses," in which La Tinti was to have sung with Genovese, the "Barber of Seville" was given, in which the tenor sang without the celebrated prima donna. The impresario was said to have been obliged to change the performance on account of an indisposition of La Tinti, and as a matter of fact Duke Cataneo was not at the theatre. Was it a clever scheme of the impresario to obtain two full houses by bringing on Genovese and Clarina one after the other? or was La Tinti's illness genuine? Whatever the audience might think, Emilio had no doubt about the matter, but, although the news of her indisposition caused him some remorse when he recalled the singer's beauty and his own brutality, the absence of the Duke and La Tinti was a source of satisfaction to both the Prince and the Duchess. Moreover, Genovese's singing was enough to drive away all unpleasant thoughts and prolong the pleasure of that charming day. Happy to take all the applause to himself, the tenor made full use of his talent, which had recently acquired a European reputation. Genovese, then twenty-three years of age, born at Bergamo, and a pupil of Veluti, devoted to his art, of agreeable presence and quick to grasp the spirit of his parts, already gave every indication of the great artist destined to fame and fortune. He had a frantic success—a term which can only be correctly used in Italy, where the appreciation of an audience is indescribably enthusiastic when it is pleased.

Several of the Prince's friends came to congratulate him upon his accession to the title and to tell him the news.

The evening before, La Tinti, brought by the Duke of Cataneo, had sung at a reception given by Signora Vulpato, where she had seemed to be in the best of voice, and had looked so well that her improvised illness was exciting a great deal of comment. According to rumors which circulated in the Café Florian, Genovese was passionately in love with La Tinti, who wished to escape his declarations of love, and the manager had not been able to prevail upon her to appear with him. According to the Austrian General, it was the Duke who was ill, and La Tinti was nursing him.

The Duchess owed the General's visit to the arrival of a French physician whom he had desired to present to her. The Prince, seeing Vendramin in another part of the house, left the box to have a confidential chat with his friend, whom he had not seen for three months; and, while strolling about the space which exists in all Italian theatres between the stalls and the lower tier boxes, he was able to observe how the Duchess received the foreigner.

"Who is that Frenchman?" the Prince asked Vendramin.

"A physician sent for by Cataneo, who wishes to know how long he has to live. The Frenchman is awaiting the arrival of Malfatti, with whom he is going to hold a consultation."

The Duchess, like all Italian women who are in love, did not allow a movement of her lover to escape her; for in that country the devotion of a woman is so complete that it is difficult to catch a single expressive glance directed at another.

"Have you won?" asked Vendramin, taking the Prince's arm.

"No," replied Emilio, "but I hope soon to be happy with Massimilla."

"Well," replied Marco, "you will be the most envied man in the world. The Duchess is the most accomplished woman in all Italy. As to me, who see everything here below through the brilliant vapors of opium, she seems to be the highest expression of art; nature has reproduced in her one of Rafael's portraits. Moreover, your passion is not displeasing to Cataneo, who counted me out a thousand crowns, which I have at your disposal."

"And I am to sleep at your house, they tell me," replied Emilio. "But come, a moment passed away from her when I might be at her side is torture."

Emilio took his place at the rear of the box and remained silent in a corner listening to the Duchess and drinking in her beauty and wit. It was for him and not for vanity that Massimilla aired the graces of her conversation, which scintillated with a wit purely Italian, in which sarcasm was directed against things and not persons, and in which only laughable matters were laughed at. Anywhere else the Duchess might have been wearisome. The Italians, an eminently intelligent people, care little to strain their wit beyond the natural; with them conversation is flowing and without effort; it never consists, as in France, of an assault at arms in which every one brings his rapier into play, and he who has little to say is humiliated. If their conversation shines, it is by a gentle and graceful satire which only plays upon well-known things, and instead of an epigram which might offend, an Italian gives a meaning look or smile. To have to think in order to understand the idea at the bottom of a remark is, according to them—and with a great deal of justice—a bore. Thus, Signora Vulpato said to the Duchess—"If you loved him you could not talk so well."

Emilio did not join in the conversation; he looked and listened. This reserve would have made many foreigners think the Prince a nonentity, whereas he was simply a man in love enjoying himself to the full. Vendramin sat down at the Prince's side, opposite the Frenchman, who, privileged because he was a stranger, kept his place in the corner opposite that occupied by the Duchess.

"Is that gentleman intoxicated?" said the physician in a low voice to Massimilla, alluding to Vendramin.

"Yes," replied the Duchess simply.

In that country of passion, every passion carries its excuse with it, and there is a charming indulgence for all its victims. The Duchess sighed deeply and her face became overcast.

"In our land, Doctor, there are many curious things! Vendramin lives on opium; this one lives on love; that man is immersed in science. Most rich young men fall in love with some dancer; older ones amass wealth; we all give ourselves up to some passion or intoxication."

"Because you are all too much devoted to a fixed idea, which a revolution would effectually cure," said the physician. "The Genoese regrets his republic; the Milanese wants his independence; the Piedmontese desires constitutional government; the Roman would have liberty . . ."

"Which he does not understand," said the Duchess. "Alas! there are Italians mad enough to desire your stupid Charter, which would destroy the influence of women. Most of my countrywomen must have your French books —useless rubbish . . ."

"Useless!" cried the physician.

"Well, my friend," continued the Duchess, "what can one find in a book which is better than what we have in our hearts! Italy is mad!"

"I do not see that a people is mad because it wishes to be its own master," said the physician.

"Good heavens!" replied the Duchess. "Is not that purchasing at the price of blood the right to dispute, as you do, over idiotic questions?"

"You approve of despotism, then," said the physician.

"Why should I not love a system of government which, while depriving us of books and nauseous politics, leaves us real men?"

"I thought Italians were more patriotic," said the Frenchman.

The Duchess began to laugh so cunningly that her questioner could not decide whether or not she was poking fun at him.

"So you are not a liberal?" said he.

"God forbid!" she answered. "Nothing is more deplorable than for women to have such opinions. Could you love a woman whose heart was full of the cares of Humanity?"

"People who love are natural aristocrats," said the Austrian General, smiling.

"As I came into the theatre," continued the Frenchman, "I saw you first, and I said to his Excellency that if it could be given to a woman to personify her country it would be you. I seemed to discern in you the Genius of Italy; but I see now with regret that, although your beauty is sublime, you have not the necessary intellect—constitutional intellect," he added.

"Must you not," said the Duchess, drawing his attention to the ballet, "find our dancers detestable and our singers execrable? Paris and London rob us of all our great talent. Paris judges and London pays. Genovese and La Tinti will not remain here six months."

At that moment the General left. Vendramin, the Prince and two other Italians exchanged smiles at the Frenchman's expense.

The physician began to fear that he had said something out of place—a rare thing for a Frenchman—but he soon found the key to the riddle.

"Do you think," Emilio asked him, "that it would be very wise of us to talk openly before our masters?"

"You are in a country of slaves," said the Duchess, with a voice and attitude which suddenly gave her the expression the absence of which the physician had deplored but a moment ago.

"Vendramin," she said, speaking in a tone loud enough to be heard by the foreigner alone, "Vendramin has begun to smoke opium, a detestable habit which he got from an Englishman who, for other reasons than his, sought an easeful death; not that vulgar death which we associate with skeletons, but a death adorned with the drapery which in France you call a flag; death in the form of a young girl crowned with laurel wreaths, or in a cloud of smoke on the flight of a cannon ball, or in the steam of a punch-bowl, or in the sparkling vapors of a diamond yet in its state of carbon.

"For three Austrian francs, whenever Vendramin wishes, he becomes a Venetian general; he commands the galleys of the Republic and goes forth to conquer the golden cupolas of Constantinople. He lounges on the divans of the harem, among the wives of the Sultan, who has become the vassal of triumphant Venice. Then he returns, restoring his palaces with the spoils of the Turkish Empire. He passes from the Eastern women to the charms of the daughters of Venice, never fearing the effects of a jealousy which exists no more.

"For three zwanzigs he is transported to the Council of Ten. He rules with a rod of iron; he decides the gravest matters, and leaves the Ducal palace for the home of some black-eyed damsel and ascends a balcony to which a white hand has attached a ladder of silk; he loves a woman to whom opium gives a poetic charm which we poor women of flesh and blood can never hope to attain. All at once, turning his head, he finds himself face to face with the terrible Senator, armed with a dagger. He sees the blade plunged into the heart of his mistress, who dies smiling, for she has saved him. "She is very happy," said the Duchess, looking at the Prince. "He escapes and takes command of the Dalmatians to conquer the Illyrian coast for his beautiful Venice, where his fame secures his pardon and where he enjoys domestic bliss: a hearth, a winter evening, a young woman and pretty children. Yes, with three pounds of opium he replenishes our empty arsenals; he sees the loading and unloading of shiploads of merchandise from every corner of the globe. Commerce no longer heaps her treasures upon London; Venice is the market of the world, in which are rebuilt the hanging gardens of Semiramis, the Temple of Jerusalem and all the marvels of Rome. Finally, he enriches the glory of the Middle Ages with new creations which revolutionize the arts, which flourish again in Venice as they did in days gone by. Monuments and men vie with each other in his brain, where empires, cities and revolutions are built and ruined in a few hours; where Venice alone increases and multiplies. For the Venice of his dreams has dominion over the sea; she has two million inhabitants, the sceptre of Italy, and possession of the Mediterranean and the Indies!"

"What a wonderful creation is the human brain; how little it is understood, even by those who have studied it, as Gall did?" said the physician.

"My dear Duchess," said Vendramin in a cavernous voice, "do not forget the last service rendered me by my elixir. After having heard ravishing voices, after having imbibed music in every pore, after having felt the most exquisite sensations and fiercest passions of Mahomet's Paradise, I pass on to the most frightful pictures. Now I see in my beloved Venice faces of children distorted like those of the dying; women covered with horrible sores, wasted and fearful to behold; men, crushed and bleeding against the sides of huge copper vessels. I begin to see Venice as she is, covered with crape, naked, despoiled and deserted. Pale phantoms creep along its streets! . . . Already I can see the grim faces of the Austrian soldiers, and my beautiful dream-life is approaching reality; while six months ago, reality was like a bad dream, and opium contained all my loves and all my joys. Alas! I have reached the shades of the tomb, in which the false and the true intermingle in a semi-darkness which is neither day nor night, but partakes of the qualities of each."

"You see there is too much patriotism in that brain," said the Prince, placing his hand on the black locks which fell over Vendramin's brow.

"Oh! if he cares for us," said Massimilla, "he will soon give up his horrible opium."

"I will cure your friend," said the Frenchman.

"Effect this cure and we will be forever in your debt," said Massimilla; "but, if you speak no ill of us when you return to France we will think more of you. Poor Italy is too much weakened under the weight of oppression to be fairly judged. For we have heard your opinion," she added, smiling.

"It was more generous than that of Austria," replied the physician.

"Austria grinds us down without compensation, but you oppressed us in order to increase and beautify our cities; you tried to stimulate us into creating large armies. You endeavored to keep Italy, while the Austrians think they are losing her; that is the whole difference. The Austrians give us a government as stupid and heavy as they are themselves, while you would crush us under your terrible activity. But what matters it whether we die by a tonic or a narcotic? In either event it is death."

"Poor Italy! To my eyes she is a beautiful woman whom France should protect by making a mistress of her!" said the physician.

"You cannot seduce us by your fancy," said the Duchess, smiling. "We shall be free, but the liberty which I wish is not your ignoble and commonplace liberty which would destroy the arts. I wish," said she in a voice which vibrated through the box—"that is, I would like to see the re-birth of every Italian Republic with its nobles, its people and its special liberties for each class. I would like to see the old republics with their civil wars, with their rivalries which produced the finest works of art, which created statesmanship and which founded our most famous princely houses. To extend the power of a government over an immense tract of land is to weaken it. The Italian Republics were the glory of Europe in the Middle Ages. Why has Italy fallen so low among nations, while the Swiss, her porters, have been victorious?"

"The Swiss Republics," said the physician, "were good housewives occupied with their little affairs and who had nothing to lose, while your Republics were haughty sovereigns, who would rather ruin themselves than bow to their neighbors. They have fallen too low ever to rise again. The Guelphs triumph!"

"Do not pity us too much," said the Duchess in a proud tone, which made the two friends start, "we reign still! In the depths of her poverty Italy is supreme in her men of learning who throng our cities. Unhappily the most of our men of genius reach a comprehension of life so rapidly that they sink to unworthy pleasures; as to those who care to play the sad game for immortality, they know very well how to lay hold of your money and claim your admiration. Yes, in this country, whose abasement is deplored by vulgar travellers and hypocritical poets and whose character is calumniated by politicians, in this country, which seems to be enervated, powerless, ruined, worn out rather than old, are to be found great talents in every branch of science and art, throwing out vigorous branches as an old vine throws out shoots which bear delicious grapes. This people of ancient kings still give us rulers in such men as Canova, Rossini, and Corvetto. These Italians are at the head of the respective branches of human learning to which they have devoted themselves. Without speaking of singers and performers, who astonish Europe by their incredible perfection, Italy still reigns in the world, which will always come to worship at her shrine. "Go this evening to the Florian; you will find in Capraja one of our most famous men, but in love with privacy. No one, except the Duke of Cataneo, my master, knows more than he about music. For that reason he has been dubbed *The Fanatic*."

After some moments of animated conversation between the Frenchman and the Duchess, who was gracefully eloquent, the Italians retired one by one to carry the news to the other boxes that the Duchess Cataneo, who was considered to be a woman of fine intellect, had beaten a clever French physician on the Italian question. That was the news of the evening.

When the Frenchman found himself alone between the Prince and the Duchess, he understood the situation and left. Massimilla bowed to the physician so coldly that the gesture alone would have been enough to have made the man hate her, if he could have forgotten the charm of her words and beauty.

Near the end of the opera Emilio was alone with the Duchess; they held each other's hands and in that position listened to the duet which finishes the "Barber of Seville."

"Nothing but music can express love," said the Duchess, moved by that song of two happy nightingales.

A tear shone in Emilio's eyes. Massimilla, beautiful as Rafael's "St. Cecile," pressed his hand. The Prince saw on the face of his mistress a joyous light, like that which bathes the sheaves of golden corn on a sunlit day; his heart beat tumultuously; he fancied he could hear a choir of angel voices. Massimilla thought the tear was caused by her remark inspired by Genovese's cavatina.

"Carino," said she in Emilio's ear, "are you not as much above expressions of love as cause is superior to effect?''

After escorting the Duchess to her gondola, Emilio went with Vendramin to the Florian.

The Café Florian at Venice is an indefinable institution. Merchants transact business there; lawyers have consultations there on the most involved matters. The Florian is at once an exchange, a theatre lobby, a reading room, a club and a confessional, and it suits the simple business methods of the Venetians so well that many Venetian women are quite ignorant of the character of their husbands' occupations, because whenever they have a letter to write they go to the Café Florian to write it. Many persons spend their entire time at the Florian; in fact, the Florian is so necessary to some people that, during the intermissions, they leave their friend's box in order to walk over to the café to see what is going on there.

While the two friends walked through the narrow streets of the Merceria they kept silence, as there were many people about; but, when they came out into St. Mark's Place, the Prince said:

''Do not go into the café yet; let us stroll about a while. I have something to say to you.''

He related his adventure with La Tinti and confessed the depressed state of his feelings. Emilio's despair seemed to Vendramin so near madness that he promised him a complete cure if he would give him a free hand in regard to the Duchess. This hope came just in time to save Emilio from drowning himself during the night; for, whenever he thought of the singer, he felt an irresistible desire to return to her.

The two friends sat down in the most select part of the café and listened to that typically Venetian conversation which is engaged in every night by men of fashion, who go over the events of the day. The chief subjects were first the personality of Lord Byron, whom the Venetians cleverly ridiculed; Cataneo's attachment for La Tinti, which seemed more inexplicable than ever in spite of the many explanations which had been offered; then the tenor's singing; and finally the contest between the Duchess and the French physician. The Duke of Cataneo entered just as the conversation was becoming enthusiastically musical. He bowed courteously to Emilio, who gravely returned the salute. Cataneo looked about the room for any other people he knew; he perceived Vendramin and greeted him; then he nodded to his banker, a very rich patrician, and finally to the man who was speaking, a famous music lover and a close friend of the Countess Albrizzi. This man's mode of life, like that of many habitués of the Florian, was quite unknown.

This was Capraja, the nobleman of whom the Duchess had spoken to the Frenchman. He belonged to that class of dreamers whose power of thought is capable of anything. An ingenious theorist, he cared about as much for fame as he did for a broken pipe; and his life harmonized with his opinions. Capraja showed himself upon the Piazzetta at about ten o'clock every morning, though no one knew where he slept. He would lounge about Venice smoking cigars. He went regularly to the Fenice, sitting in the stalls; in the intermissions he would go over to the Florian, where he would drink three or four cups of coffee every day. The rest of the evening would be passed in the café, which he would not leave until two o'clock in the morning. Twelve hundred francs a year satisfied all his wants.

He ate but one meal a day, at a pastry-cook's in the Merceria, where his dinner was always ready at a certain hour on a little table in the rear of the shop. The pastry-cook's daughter prepared with her own hands his stuffed oysters, kept him supplied with cigars, and took care of his money. Following his advice, the young girl, although very pretty, did not countenance any suitors, lived prudently, and wore the old Venetian costume. This young pure-blooded Venetian girl was twelve years old when Capraja first became interested in her, and was twenty-six when he died; she loved him dearly, although he had never given her the least caress, and she knew nothing of the old nobleman's intentions in regard to her. The result was that the girl acquired the authority of a mother over him. She would tell him when to change his linen. He never looked at a woman, either at the theatre or in the street. Although he was a descendant of a very old patrician family, his ancestry did not seem to him to be worth mentioning. But after midnight he would rouse himself from his lethargy and show by his conversation that he had observed and heard everything.

This other Diogenes, half Turk, half Venetian, was short and fat; he had the aquiline nose of a Doge, the satirical laugh of an inquisitor, and a cautious though smiling mouth. At his death it was learned that he had lived in a little attic near San Benedetto. He was a rich man with two millions invested in the various European public funds. He left it all to the pastry-cook's daughter.

"Genovese," he was saying, "will do very well. I do not know whether he really understands music or merely sings by instinct, but he is the first singer who has ever satisfied me. I shall not die without having heard those trills sung as I have so often heard them in my dreams, when I seem to see sounds in the air. The trill is the highest expression of art; the arabesque which ornaments the finest apartment in the palace: a little less and there would be nothing; a little more, and everything would be confused. Bent on awaking in your soul a thousand sleeping thoughts, it darts across space, leaving in its train a cloud of seeds which are gathered in by the ear and blossom in the heart. Believe me, when Rafael painted Saint Cecilia, he gave the preference to music over poetry. He was right. Music is addressed to the heart, while writing appeals only to the intellect. Music communicates thoughts spontaneously as perfumes do. The voice of the singer does not affect the thought or the memory of happiness so much as it strikes at the root of thought, and moves the very elements of our sensations. It is deplorable that the vulgar have forced musicians to clothe their expressions in words—an artificial emotion; but it is true that otherwise they would not be understood by the public. The trill, therefore, is the only thing left to lovers of pure music and art unadorned.

"This evening as I listened to the last cavatina I seemed to be myself beckoned by a young girl whose glance made me young again. The enchantress placed a crown upon my head and conducted me to that little ivory door which opens on the mysterious land of dreams. I owe to Genovese the pleasure of having left my old shell for a few moments, which would be brief if measured by time, but very long if my sensations were counted. I was young again and loved; it was springtime, and the air was filled with the scent of roses!"

"You are mistaken, dear Capraja," said the Duke.

"There is a power in music more magical than the trill."

"Which?" asked Capraja.

"The unison of two voices or of a voice and a violin—the instrument which most nearly approaches the human voice," replied the Duke. "That perfect unison carries us back to the fountain-head of life, to the birthplace of the glorious elements which transport man to that dazzling height where he can move the world with his thought. You need a theme, Capraja, but the elements are enough for me; you would have water flowing through the myriad canals of the machine to break out into dazzling fountains; but I am satisfied with the still and pure waters of a lake without a ripple. I can embrace the infinite!"

"Say no more, Cataneo," said Capraja proudly. "What! can you not see the fairy who, in her flight across a shining atmosphere, draws out with the golden thread of harmony the melodic treasures which she laughingly throws at us? Have you never felt the touch of the magic wand, as she says to Curiosity: 'Arise!' and the radiant form of the goddess appears in the depths of the mind; she runs to her wonderful caskets and taps them as an organist strikes the keys. Suddenly the memories escape, covered with the roses of the past, divinely preserved and still fresh. Our long-lost mistress returns and strokes with her white hands the heavy, black locks of youth; the heart runs over; love runs in torrents. The burning bush of youth flames up anew and we hear its divine words! And the voice rolls upward. It calls forth new and deeper joys—those of an unknown future to which the fairy points as she fades into the blue heavens."

"And you," replied Cataneo, "have you never seen the strong light of a star open up to you the greatest depths, and have you never mounted that ray which carries you into the ether of Principles which move the Universe?"

The Duke and Capraja were playing a game the conditions of which were a mystery to the onlookers.

"Genovese's voice stirs the fibres," said Capraja.

"And La Tinti's fires the blood," replied the Duke.

"What a paraphrase of happy love is that cavatina!" said Capraja. "Ah! Rossini was young when he composed that theme of effervescing joy! My heart fills with new blood, a thousand desires bubble in my veins. Never did more angelic strains transport my soul; never did the fairy show me a more beautiful form, or smile more sweetly, as she raised the curtain which conceals my other existence."

"To-morrow, old friend," replied the Duke, "you will ride on the back of a snow-white swan, which will bear you to the greenest of pastures; you will see the springtime as children see it. Your heart will enjoy the warmth of a new sun; you will sleep on crimson silks. The swan will be the voice of Genovese, if he is able to unite it to its Leda, La Tinti's voice. To-morrow 'Moses' will be given, the most stupendous opera conceived by the greatest of Italian composers."

The others paid no more attention to the Duke and Capraja. Only Vendramin and the French physician listened to them. The opium smoker understood that poetry; he had the key to the palace in which the two voluptuous imaginations were roaming. The physician tried to understand and understood; for he belonged to the coterie of fine spirits belonging to the Paris school who are as profound metaphysicians as they are skilful analysts.

"Did you understand them?" asked Emilio, as he and Vendramin left the café on their way to Vendramin's palace.

"Yes, dear Emilio," replied Vendramin. "Those two men belong to the legion of happy spirits who have the power to throw off their masks of flesh and, mounting the magic steed, soar through the azure world of sublime fancy. Art takes them into that land to which you are transported by your love and I by my opium. They can only be understood by their affinities. I, whose soul is exalted by a sad enough means; I, who live a hundred years in a single night, I can understand those great intellects when they speak of that magnificent realm, called the land of Chimeras by some who think themselves wise, but which is the land of Reality to us, whom they look upon as fools. Well, the Duke and Capraja, who formerly knew each other at Naples, are music mad!"

"But what was that singular system which Capraja wished to explain to Cataneo?" asked the Prince. "Did you understand it?"

"Yes," said Vendramin, "Capraja is a close friend of a certain Cremona musician, living at the Capello Palace, who believes that sounds meet in us a matter analogous to that which causes light, and which, in us, produces thought. According to him, man has chords within him which are acted upon by sound, and correspond to our nervous centres, which originate our sensations and ideas. Capraja, who sees in art the means by which man may bring his exterior nature into harmony with another wonderful nature, which he calls the inner life, shares the ideas of that instrument maker, who is now composing an opera.

"Imagine a sublime creation in which the marvels of the visible world are instantaneously reproduced with majesty, delicacy, and on an immeasurable scale; in which sensation is infinite, but which may only be entered by certain privileged natures possessing divine power. Then you will have an idea of the ecstatic joys spoken of by Cataneo and Capraja, who are themselves poets.

"But when a man passes beyond the natural world, and enters the spiritual kingdom of abstractions, in which everything is seen in its first Cause and the omnipotence of its effects, that man is no longer understood by ordinary intellects."

"You have just described my love for Massimilla," said Emilio. "My dear friend, there exists in me a power which awakes in the fire of her look, or at her slightest touch, and throws me into a world of light which is so glorious that I dare not speak of it. Desire draws that invisible world down to me instead of raising my inert body; then the air becomes crimson and sparkling; unknown perfumes of inexpressible sweetness soothe my nerves; my head is crowned with roses, and I am filled with a delicious languor."

"Opium has the same effect upon me," replied Vendramin.

"You wish to die then?" said Emilio fearfully.

"With Venice," replied Vendramin, stretching his hand toward St. Mark's. "Can you see a single one of its columns or spires that is straight? Do you not understand that the sea is calling for its prey?"

The Prince bowed his head and spoke no more of love to his friend. One must travel in conquered lands to appreciate the country of the free.

When they reached the Vendramin Palace, the Prince and Emilio saw a gondola at the water entrance. The Prince embraced Vendramin tenderly and bade him good-night.

The gondolier, who was leaning against a pillar watching the two friends, went up to the Prince and whispered in his ear—

"The Duchess, your Highness."

Emilio leaped into the gondola and was clasped in two soft arms which would not release him. The Prince had ceased to be Emilio; he was the lover of La Tinti.

"Forgive this deception, my love," said the Sicilian, "I would have died if you had not come."

And the gondola glided over the discreet waters.

The next evening at half-past seven o'clock the spectators were in their usual places at the theatre, with the exception of those who occupied the pit, who always took seats at random. Old Capraja was in Cataneo's box. Before the overture the Duke paid a visit to the Duchess. He made a few inconsequential remarks, without sarcasm or bitterness, but with a coldly polite manner such as he might have used to a stranger. In spite of his efforts to appear natural and agreeable, the Prince could not change his expression, which was terribly disturbed. This alteration of his usually placid features must have been caused by jealousy. The Duchess undoubtedly shared Emilio's feelings; her face was downcast and she was clearly dejected. The Duke, who seemed embarrassed between that sulky couple, took advantage of the Frenchman's entrance to leave.

"Sir," said Cataneo, "you are about to hear a stupendous musical poem which is quite difficult to understand at the first hearing; but I leave you to the Duchess, who, as a pupil of mine, will be able to interpret it for you better than any one else."

The Frenchman, like the Duke, was struck by the miserable expression on the faces of the two lovers.

"Then is a guide necessary for an Italian opera?" he said to the Duchess with a smile.

Recalled to her duties as mistress of the box, the Duchess tried to chase away the gloom which clouded her brow and eagerly seized a topic of conversation which would afford an outlet for her inward irritation.

"It is not an opera," she replied; "it is an oratorio, a work which very much resembles some fine building, and which I shall gladly explain to you. Believe me, it will not be too much to ask you to bring all the powers of your mind to bear upon this work of Rossini's, for it is necessary to be at once a great poet and a great musician to understand the aim of such music. You belong to a nation whose customs and language are too matter-of-fact to enable it to enter fully into music; but France is versatile enough to love and cultivate it, and you will succeed in this as in everything else. Moreover, you must know that music like that created by Lulli, Mozart, Beethoven, Cimarosa, and Rossini, and by the geniuses of the future who will continue it, is a new art, unknown to past generations, who had not as many instruments as we now possess, and who knew nothing of harmony, upon which we now hang the garlands of melody. An art so new requires deep study, study which will develop the feeling to which music appeals. This sentiment hardly exists in France, a nation taken up with philosophic theories, analyses and discussions, and always disturbed by political ruptures. Music, which needs profound peace, is the language of souls that are tender and loving, and tend toward inward exaltation. This language, a thousand times richer than that of words, bears the same relationship to speech as thought does to words; it awakens thoughts and ideas in the simplicity of their primitive form, where ideas and sensations are born, and in their natural state. That power over our inward nature is one of the glories of music. Other arts give definite creations to the intellect; the creations of music are infinite. We are obliged to accept the ideas of the poet, the picture of the painter, and the statue of the sculptor; but each of us interprets music according to his own temperament, as sorrow or joy, hope or despair. Where other arts restrict our thoughts by fixing them upon some determined thing, music sets them free to wander over all nature, which it alone has the power to express. You shall see how I understand Rossini's 'Moses'!"

She bent toward the physician, that she might be able to speak to him without being overheard by the others.

"Moses is the liberator of an enslaved people!" she said; "remember that, and you will see with what religious hope the entire audience will listen to the prayer of the delivered Hebrews, and by what a thunder of applause they will respond!"

Emilio sat down in the rear of the box as soon as the conductor raised his baton. The Duchess pointed the physician to the place vacated by the Prince; but the Frenchman was too much interested in what was going on between the two lovers to enter the musical palace built by the man whom all Italy was applauding. For Rossini had triumphed in his own country. The Frenchman observed the Duchess, who spoke under pressure of a nervous agitation and reminded him of the Niobe that he had admired at Florence. She had the same noble sorrow, the same visible impassibility, but the soul was reflected in the warm coloring of her cheeks and in her eyes, through which shone a defiant light, scorching her tears in the fire of pride. Her suffering seemed to be lessened when she looked at Emilio, who kept his eyes fixed upon her. It was quite easy to see that she wished to soften his terrible despair. The state of her heart gave an indefinable grandeur to her intellect. Like most women when they are under the influence of an extraordinary exaltation, she surpassed herself. But her face kept its habitual nobility of expression, for it was her thoughts and not her features that were disturbed. Perhaps she wished to display all her wit in order to give an attraction to life, and thus keep her lover.

When the orchestra played the three chords in C major, placed by the composer at the head of his work to make it understood that it would be sung—for the true overture is the entire extent of the vast theme from the sudden attack to the moment when the light appears at Moses' command—the Duchess could not repress a convulsive movement which proved how much the music harmonized with her hidden suffering.

"How those three chords freeze you!" she said. "They make you expect grief. Listen attentively to this introduction, which is based upon the terrible cry of a people chastised by the hand of God. What lamentation! The King, the Queen, their first-born son, the princes and all the people wail; they are stricken in their pride and conquest; their greed is checked. Ah! Rossini, you did well to throw this bone to the Germans to pick, who would not acknowledge that we knew anything of harmony.

"You are about to hear the sinister melody with which the master has embellished this profoundly harmonic composition, comparable to the most complicated German operas, but which neither tires nor irritates the mind. You Frenchmen, who have been through the bloodiest of revolutions, whose aristocracy has been crushed under the paw of the lion of the populace, on the day when this oratorio is performed in Paris, you will understand that magnificent lament of the victims of a God who avenges his people. No one but an Italian could ever write that wonderful theme, rich in Dantesque beauty. Do you think that it is nothing to dream of vengeance even for a moment? Old German masters: Handel, Sebastian Bach, and you, too, Beethoven, down on your knees! Behold the queen of art! Behold Italy triumphant!"

The Duchess finished speaking before the curtain rose. The physician then heard the sublime symphony with which the composer opens that vast oratorio. It is the grief of an entire nation. Grief is always the same in its expression, especially when it is physical suffering. Thus, having instinctively divined, as a man of genius, that he should not have too much variety in his ideas, the musician, as soon as he found his fundamental phrase, worked it up from tonality to tonality, grouping the choruses and characters on the motive by modulations and cadenzas, admirably developed. Musical power is based upon simplicity. The effect of that phrase, repeated by princes and people, which portrays the sensations of cold and night in a people who have always been bathed in the warm rays of the sun, is startling. There is something indescribably ominous in that slow movement; it is cold and relentless as some great iron bar wielded by a celestial executioner, who lets it fall rhythmically on the limbs of his victims. When the spectator hears the great sweep of that phrase—from C major to G minor; from C back to the dominant G, resuming the fortissimo on the tonic E flat; then from F major to C minor; becoming more and more charged with terror, cold and darkness—his mind cannot help sympathizing with the impression intended by the musician.

The Frenchman, therefore, felt the keenest emotion when all that sorrow culminated in an explosion of grief. Never has there been such a grand combination of natural effects, such a complete idealism of nature. In all great national calamities, grief is at first individual, then it is taken up here and there by groups, until at last, when the pangs of sorrow have been felt by all, it breaks out into a tempest.

Rossini has composed along these lines. After the explosion in C major, Pharaoh sings his sublime recitative, "O God of Vengeance." The prevailing theme becomes more marked; all Egypt calls Moses to her aid.

The Duchess profited by the interval necessary for the arrival of Moses and Aaron to further enlighten the Frenchman.

"Let them weep," she cried passionately; "they have done much evil. Expiate, O Egyptians, expiate the sins committed in the hardness of your hearts! With what art that grand painter has used all the darkest colors of music? What icy shadows! What blackness! Does not your soul mourn? Are you not convinced of the reality of the black clouds which darken the scene? Do not the thickest shadows cover the face of nature before your eyes? Where are the palaces, the palms and the green fields?

"But how soothing are those deeply religious notes of the celestial physician who is about to heal the cruel wound! How everything is worked up to the climax in that magnificent invocation which Moses makes to God! By a wise calculation, the particulars of which will be explained to you by Capraja, that invocation is only accompanied by the brass instruments, which give a religious coloring to the piece. See how fertile the man is in resources. Rossini has derived new beauties from the very difficulty he created. He has been able to reserve the stringed instruments to express the brightness of the day which is to succeed the gloom, and thus produce one of the most powerful effects in music. Previous to this stroke of inimitable genius, no such effect was ever produced by mere recitative. There has not yet been an air or a duet. The poet has been sustained by the force of his thought, by the truth of his images and by the vigor of his declamation. That sorrowful scene, that deep night, those cries of despair—the picture is as wonderful as the 'Deluge' of your great Poussin."

Moses raised his staff and the dawn broke.

"See how the music vies with the sun, from which it has borrowed its brilliancy, and with the whole of nature, of which it reproduces every detail!" continued the Duchess in a low tone. "Here, art has attained its apotheosis; no musician can do more. Do you hear Egypt awaking after its long sleep? Joy rises with the day. In what work, ancient or modern, will you meet with such a great passage? The sublimest joy contrasted with the deepest sorrow! What cries! What rippling notes as the oppressed soul breathes again! What ecstasy! What a tremolo in that orchestra! What a fine tutti! It is the mad joy of a delivered people! Are you not thrilled with pleasure?"

The physician, surprised by that contrast, one of the most magnificent in modern music, clapped his hands, carried away by his admiration.

"Bravo, Duchess!" said Vendramin, who had been listening.

"The introduction is finished," continued the Duchess. "You have had a shock," she added; "your heart is beating fast; in the depths of your imagination you have seen the most glorious sun inundating with torrents of light a whole country, formerly cold and desolate. Now you will know how to appreciate the composer when you hear him to-morrow, after having been under his influence to-day. Of what do you think that phrase of the rising sun consisted, so varied and so complete? It is nothing but the simple chord of C continually repeated, to which Rossini has added the chord of four-six. To portray the coming of the light he has taken the same means as he employed to paint the darkness and suffering. That pictured sunrise is absolutely similar to the real sunrise. Light is the same everywhere, and its effects are varied only according to the objects which it strikes. Am I not right? Very well! the musician selected for his musical base a single motif—the simple chord of C. When the sun first appears its rays illuminate the mountain peaks and then the valleys. On the same principle the chord is played on the treble string of the violins with an icy sweetness; one by one the other instruments take it up, until the whole orchestra is a mass of sound. As light affects the most distant objects first, gradually coming nearer and nearer, so it awakened every instrument until the tutti was reached. The violins, silent hitherto, gave the signal by their faint tremolo, vaguely shimmering like the first waves of light.

"That pretty, gay, almost luminous movement which caressed the soul is supported by deep notes from the horns, to give the impression of the last clouds lingering in the valleys while the first crimson plays upon the mountain tops. Then the wind instruments come in gently, working up to the general effect. The voices are united in sighs of happiness and astonishment. Finally all the brass instruments join in a torrent of glad sound.

"Light, the source of harmony, has drenched all nature; all the riches of music are brought into play with a force and brilliance that can only be likened to the rays of the Eastern sun. That repeated C even recalls to you the happy morning song of birds by its cascades of shrill and rippling notes. The same tonality, adapted by a master hand, expresses the joy of all nature as it soothes the sorrow it had awakened. There is the stamp of the great master: Unity! A single phrase expresses the sorrow of a nation; a single chord sets before you every detail of awakening nature and the joyous manifestations of an entire people. Those two wonderful passages are crowned by an appeal to the Living God, the Author of all things, sorrow and gladness. Is not that introduction a mighty poem?"

"You are right," said the Frenchman.

"Here we have a quintet as only Rossini can give us; if he has ever been drawn into that sweet and soft voluptuousness with which our music is reproached, is it not in this lovely movement, in which the gayety of a delivered people is expressed, but which portrays also an ill-fated love? Pharaoh's son loves a Jewess, who loves him. What makes this quintet so delicious and ravishing is the return to the ordinary emotions of life after the great portrayal of the woe and gladness of a whole nation, pictured with all its Biblical wonders.

"Am I not right?" said the Duchess, turning to the Frenchman after a magnificent stretto.

"What art there is in that piece?" she continued after a pause, during which she waited for his reply; "Rossini began it with a delicious horn solo, supported by a harp arpeggio. The first voices heard in the great chorus are those of Moses and Aaron, giving thanks to the true God. Their grave and sonorous chant recalls the sublime thoughts of the invocation, yet harmonize with the gayety of the heathen people. This transition contains something at once celestial and worldly—two qualities which genius alone can combine—and which gives the andante of the quintet a radiance which I might compare to that with which Titian surrounds his divine personages. Did you remark the ravishing setting of the voices? How skilfully the composer has arranged them with the charming instrumental motives! With what art he has prepared the joyous festivals? Did you notice the dancing choruses and the mad frolics of the nation delivered from danger? And when the clarinet gave the signal for the stretto, 'Voices of gladness,' so brilliant and so animated, did not your soul feel that holy thrill of which King David sings in his psalms?"

"Yes, that air would make a charming dance!" said the physician.

"How French, how typically French!" cried the Duchess, checked in the middle of her exaltation by that exasperating remark. "Yes, you are capable of degrading that sublime rapture to your dance-hall capers. Sublime poetry is never appreciated by you. You caricature genius, saints, kings, national calamities—everything that is sacred. The vulgarization of the greatest thoughts by your dances is a caricature of music. With you, intellect kills the soul, as reasoning destroys reason."

The entire box remained silent during the recitative of

Osiride and Membre, plotting to annul the order of departure in favor of the Hebrews.

"Have I offended you?" said the physician to the Duchess. "I am in despair. Your voice is like a magic wand which opens the compartments of my brain, bringing out new ideas, quickened by those sublime strains."

"No," said she. "You have praised our great musician in your own way. I can see that Rossini will be a success in France, if only by his appeal to the intellectual and the sensual. But let us hope that there may be a few lovers of the ideal in your country who will appreciate the exaltation and the magnificence of such music. Ah! here is the famous duet between Elcia and Osiride," she continued, while the pit was greeting La Tinti's appearance with a triple salvo of applause. "If La Tinti understands the role of Elcia, you will hear the sublime song of a woman who is struggling with love of country and love for one of its oppressors, while Osiride, passionately in love with his beautiful captive, tries to detain her. The opera rests as much upon this great idea as upon the resistance of the Pharaohs to the power of God and liberty. You must bear that in mind if you wish to understand the stupendous work. In spite of the disfavor with which you look upon the inventions of our libretto poets, permit me to draw your attention to the art with which this drama is constructed. The contrast necessary to all fine works, and so favorable to the development of the music, is to be found in it. What greater field could a composer have than a nation yearning for liberty, kept in chains by bad faith, sustained by God, and heaping miracle upon miracle to gain its freedom? What more dramatic than the Prince's love for the Jewess, which almost justifies treason against the power of the tyrant?

"So much does that daring and wonderful musical poem express, in which Rossini has given both nations their fantastic peculiarities. The songs of the Hebrews and their faith in God are in continual contrast with the cries of rage and the efforts of Pharaoh, who is pictured in all his might. Osiride, deeply in love, hopes to keep his mistress by recalling to her memory all the sweetness of their love; he tries to ween her from her love of country. Can you not feel the delicious languor, the ardent sweetness and the voluptuous memories of Eastern love in the air: 'How can you leave me thus?' of Osiride, and in Elcia's reply: 'Why do you torment me so?'

"No, two hearts so harmoniously united cannot part," she said, looking at the Prince. "But the lovers are suddenly interrupted by the triumphant voice of the nation, which echoes in the distance and recalls Elcia to her duty. What a delicious allegro is the March of the Hebrews to the desert! Only Rossini could accomplish so much with clarinets and trumpets! An art that can portray all the emotions of patriotism in two phrases is surely near Heaven! That appeal has always moved me so deeply that I cannot express in words how sad it must be for those who are still slaves to see the departure of the liberated people!"

The Duchess's eyes filled as she listened to the magnificent motif which dominates the opera.

"What loving heart would not share my pain!" she murmured in Italian, as La Tinti began that admirable cantilene of the stretto in which she implores pity on her suffering.

"But what is the matter? The pit is in a tumult!"

"Genovese is braying like a donkey," said the Prince.

As a matter of fact, this duet, the first in which La Tinti had taken part, was ruined by the complete breakdown of Genovese. From the time the tenor began to sing with La Tinti his fine voice changed. His splendid method, recalling that of Crescentini and Veluti, seemed to fail him utterly. A sustained note out of place, an embellishment carried out too far, quite spoiled his singing. Without leading up to it, he would burst out into a volume of sound, like the pouring of water through a sluice suddenly opened. In short, he betrayed a complete and voluntary neglect of the laws of good taste.

The pit was greatly excited. The Venetians thought there was some collusion between Genovese and his friends. La Tinti was recalled and applauded with frenzy, while Genovese received a few hints of the pit's hostile feeling toward him.

During this scene, which exceedingly amused the Frenchman, La Tinti was recalled eleven times to receive the frenzied plaudits of the audience, while Genovese, all but hissed, dared not offer her his hand. The Doctor made a remark to the Duchess concerning the stretto.

"Rossini should have expressed in that duet," he said, "the deepest grief, yet I find an engaging brightness and gayety, quite out of place."

"You are right," replied the Duchess. "That fault is the effect of one of those tyrannies which our composers must obey. He was thinking more of his prima donna than of Elcia when he wrote that stretto. This evening, even though La Tinti has executed it more perfectly than ever, I entered so thoroughly into the situation that this gay passage is full of sadness to me."

The physician carefully observed the Prince and Duchess, but could not guess the reason that separated them and that had made that duet so painful to both.

Massimilla lowered her voice and said in the physician's ear—

"You are about to hear something magnificent—the conspiracy of Pharaoh against the Hebrews. That majestic air, 'Let him learn to respect me!' is a triumph. The Throne is about to speak; Pharaoh will withdraw the concessions which have been made; he arms himself in his fury. He rises to his feet to seize a prey which is escaping him. Rossini never wrote anything impressed with such energy! It is a complete work in itself, supported by wonderful orchestration, as, indeed, is every part of this opera in which the power of youth is apparent in the smallest details."

The entire audience applauded that beautiful conception, which was admirably rendered by the singer and well understood by the Venetians.

"Here is the finale," continued the Duchess. "You will hear again that march inspired by the happiness of freedom, and by faith in God, who permits his people to go forth joyously into the desert! Who would not be refreshed by the celestial raptures of those people departing from slavery? Ah! sweet and living melodies! Hail to the fine genius that has expressed such sentiments! There is something warlike in that march which proclaims that the God of Armies is with them. What depth there is in those graceful songs! The Biblical pictures move the soul, and that divine musical scene brings us actually before one of the grandest spectacles of the ancient or modern world. The religious quality of certain of the vocal parts, and the manner in which the voices are grouped, express all we can conceive of the wonders of that first age of humanity.

"But that fine chorus is only the development of the march theme in its musical sequence. That motif is the basis both of the air and the brilliant orchestration that acccompanies it. Now Elcia joins her people, and her regrets form a graceful contrast to the general rejoicing. Listen to her duet with Amenofi. Never has despairing love given voice to such songs! They breathe a melancholy grace; the secret mourning of a broken heart. What sadness! Ah! the desert will be a desert indeed to her!

"Finally we have the terrible combat between the Egyptians and the Hebrews! Their mirth is turned to confusion by the arrival of the Egyptians. The musical idea in the accomplishment of Pharaoh's orders, a grave and gloomy passage, dominates the finale; it seems as though you can hear the tramp of the mighty armies of Egypt pursuing God's chosen people, gradually surrounding them like a huge African serpent enveloping its prey. What grace there is in the plaints of that abused people! Is it not a little more Italian than Hebrew? What a magnificent movement that is which brings together the chiefs of the two nations and all the passions of the drama! What an admirable mingling of sentiments there is in that fine ottetto, in which the anger of Moses is contrasted with that of the two Pharaohs! Never had a composer a vaster subject! The famous finale in 'Don Giovanni,' after all, is only a picture of a libertine defying his victims, who invoke the vengeance of Heaven; while here the powers of the world are arrayed against God. Two nations, one feeble, the other strong, are face to face. And Rossini has made excellent use of his opportunities. He has succeeded in portraying, without making himself ridiculous, the action of a furious storm as a background for terrible imprecations. He does it by the use of chords in triple time, with an ominous energy and persistence which are convincing. The fury of the Egyptians surprised by the rain of fire, and the Hebrews' cries of vengeance, required dexterous grouping; so notice how he has developed the orchestration in the choruses. The allegro assai in C minor has a terrible sound in the midst of that deluge of fire.

"Confess," said the Duchess at the moment when, raising his staff, Moses brings down the fire from heaven, and the powers of the composer are exerted to the full, "that tumult and confusion have never been better expressed in music?"

"Certainly the pit is enthusiastic," said the Frenchman.

"But something is the matter down there? They are all excitement," continued the Duchess.

In the finale Genovese had made such hideous noises whenever he was singing with La Tinti that the pit, whose pleasure he had spoiled, was in a fury. There is nothing more irritating to Italian ears than the contrast of good and bad music.

The manager took it upon himself to go before the curtain. He said that Genovese, on being questioned, had replied that he could not imagine how he had lost the favor of the audience at the very moment when he considered he had reached the perfection of his art.

"If he had sung as badly as he did yesterday we would not complain!" replied Capraja, furiously.

Contrary to Italian custom, little attention was paid to the ballet. In every box nothing was talked of but Genovese's singular conduct and the explanation of the manager. Those who were admitted behind the scenes hastened to try and find out the meaning of the catastrophe, and presently it was on everybody's lips that a horrible scene had occurred between La Tinti and Genovese, in which the prima donna had accused the tenor of being jealous of her success and of having compromised her by his ridiculous conduct; that he had even tried to spoil her singing. The singer wept bitterly. She had hoped to please her lover, she said, who should be among the audience, but whom she had not seen.

One must be familiar with the peaceful life of the Venetians—so uneventful that a slight quarrel between two lovers or the passing indisposition of a singer is looked upon with as much importance as is given in England to politics—to realize the excitement which filled the Fenice and the Café Florian. La Tinti in love; the madness or vile conduct of Genovese, due to that artistic jealousy which is so well understood by Italians—what a rich mine for discussion! The pit was in such an uproar that it might have been taken for an exchange. It must have been astonishing to a Frenchman, accustomed to the quiet of Paris theatres. The boxes were like so many swarming bee-hives. But one man took no part in the tumult. Emilio Memmi turned his back on the scene and, his eyes fixed on Massimilla, he seemed to live in her glances; he did not once look at the singer.

"I need not ask you the result of my intervention, *caro carino*," said Vendramin to Emilio. "Your pure and holy Massimilla has been the soul of kindness. In fact, she has been La Tinti!"

The Prince answered with a movement of his head indicative of terrible melancholy.

"Then your love has not descended from the dizzy heights to which it soared," continued Vendramin, under the influence of opium. "It has not materialized. This morning, like six months ago, you felt the most enchanting sensations. Massimilla's voice bathed you in luminous waves; the touch of her hand set free a thousand joys, which abandoned the cells of your brain to group themselves in a halo around your head, and drew you upward, bathed in purple light, to an azure sky, above the mountains of snow, to the land where the sinless love of the angels dwells. Her smile and kisses draped you in an enchanted robe which consumed the last traces of terrestrial nature. Her eyes were twin stars which transformed you into light.

"You were like two angels prostrate under celestial palms, waiting for the opening of the gates of Paradise; but they turned heavily on their hinges, and in your impatience you struck them. Your hand encountered nothing but a vapor which was swifter than your desire. Crowned with white roses and resembling a heavenly bride, your shining companion wept at your fury. Perhaps she was reciting melodious litanies to the Virgin, while the diabolical voluptuousness of the earth filled your heart with its infamous clamor; and you disdained the divine fruits of that ecstasy in which I shall dwell to the end of my days."

"Your intoxication, dear Vendramin," said Emilio calmly, "distorts reality. How is it possible to conceive of a purely bodily languor into which the abuse of pleasures plunges us, but which leaves to the soul its eternal desire and to the intellect its pure reasoning powers? But I am weary of this torture. This night shall be my last. Having made my last effort I shall give back the child to its mother; the Adriatic will receive my last breath! . . ."

"You are foolish," replied Vendramin, "but no, you are mad; for madness, that crisis which we despise, is but the memory of a former state troubling our present existence. The genius of my dreams has told me that and many other things besides! You want to combine the Duchess and La Tinti; but, dear Emilio, why not take them separately? That would be much wiser. Rafael alone has united form and idea. You wish to be the Rafael of love; but chance is not created. Rafael is one of the accidents of nature which made form and thought antagonistic; otherwise nothing could exist. When the Cause is stronger than the Effect there can be nothing. We must live either in heaven or on earth. Remain in heaven; you will come back to earth soon enough!"

"I shall take the Duchess home," said the Prince, "and risk my last attempt. . . Afterward—?"

"Afterward," said Vendramin quickly, "will you promise to call for me at the Florian?"

"Yes."

This conversation, carried on in modern Greek between Vendramin and the Prince, who, like a great many Venetians, were acquainted with that language, could not be understood by the Duchess or the Frenchman.

The physician, although he was quite outside the little circle formed by the Duchess, Emilio and Vendramin—for all three understood one another by those expressive Italian glances—managed to glean a part of the truth. An ardent request made by the Duchess to Vendramin had prompted the young Venetian's proposal to Emilio, for Massimilla had divined the suffering which her lover was undergoing, though she had not guessed at his relations with La Tinti.

"Those two young men are mad," said the physician.

"As to the Prince," replied the Duchess, "leave his cure to me. As to Vendramin, if he has not heard that sublime music, he is probably incurable."

"If you would tell me the cause of their madness I could cure it," cried the physician.

"Since when have doctors ceased to be mind readers?" said the Duchess, mischievously.

The ballet was at an end and the second act of "Moses" was beginning. The pit was still and attentive. There was a rumor floating about that the Duke of Cataneo had lectured Genovese, representing to him how he had wronged La Tinti, the diva of the evening. A splendid second act was expected.

"The Prince and his father open the scene," said the Duchess; "they have yielded again; but they have insulted the Hebrews and are trembling with rage. The father is consoled by the approaching marriage of his son, and the son is in despair on account of that obstacle to his love, opposed at every hand. Genovese and Carthagenova are singing admirably. You see, the tenor has made his peace with the pit. How well he brings out the riches of that music? The phrase sung by the son on the tonic and repeated by the father on the dominant is in accordance with the grave and simple system upon which the whole score is based. The simplicity of the methods employed make the fertility of the music seem even more wonderful. Egypt is there in every detail. I do not believe there is a single movement in modern music which breathes such grandeur. The grave and majestic paternity of the king is expressed in that magnificent phrase which conforms with the solemn character of the whole work. Certainly Pharaoh's son pouring out his grief on his father's breast could not be better presented by any pompous scene. Do you not feel within you an echo of the majesty of that old monarch?"

"It is indeed sublime music!" said the Frenchman.

"The air of 'Pace miasmarrita,' which the Queen is about to sing, is one of those bravuras of a style affected by most composers and which mar the general effect of the drama; but it is true that oftentimes an opera could not be given at all if the vanity of the prima donna was not flattered. Nevertheless, this particular musical 'perquisite' is such a fine piece of music that it is generally performed as it is written. It is so brilliant that the singers do not substitute their favorite air, as is done in most of the operas.

"Now we have a brilliant page in the score, the duet between Osiride and Elcia in the cave where Osiride is concealing her from the departing Hebrews, that he may flee with her from Egypt. The two lovers are disturbed by the arrival of Aaron, who has been to warn Amalthea, and we hear the king of quartets: 'Mi manca la voce.' This quartet is one of those masterpieces which will stand the test of time, that great destroyer of music, for it is written in a language which never changes.

"It is chiefly for the marvellous ease with which he changes the form that Rossini should be admired; to obtain this result he has had recourse to the old method of the canon in unison to bring in the voices and merge them in the same melody. As the form of those sublime cantilene is new, he has placed them in an old setting; and to make them stand out well he has silenced the orchestra, accompanying the voice only by a harp arpeggio. The details could not possibly have been more ingeniously arranged, nor could the general effect have been grander.

"Good Heavens! another commotion!" cried the Duchess.

Genovese, who had sung his duet so well with Carthagenova, was again committing vocal enormities while singing with La Tinti. The great tenor had become as bad as the worst of the chorus. There arose the most fearful hubbub that the Fenice had ever seen. The tumult only ceased with La Tinti's voice, who, enraged at the obstacle to her singing created by Genovese's behavior, sang "Mi manca la voce" as it never had been sung before. The enthusiasm reached its height; the audience passed from indignation and fury to the most exquisite enjoyment.

"She fills my soul with floods of purple," said Capraja, holding out his hand as though in benediction.

"May Heaven shower blessings on her head!" cried a gondolier.

"Pharaoh is about to revoke his command," continued the Duchess, while the storm was dying away in the pit. "Moses stuns him by telling him of the death of all the first-born of Egypt, singing that song of vengeance which thunders the wrath of Heaven, through which can be heard the Hebrew trumpets."

The air was received with a salvo of bravos and handclapping, followed by a deep silence. Nothing could be more significant or more Venetian than that outbreak, which as quickly subsided.

"I shall say nothing about the tempo di marcia, which proclaims the coronation of Osiride, in which the father defies Moses' threat; to hear it is enough. The great Beethoven has written nothing grander. That march, full of worldly pomp, contrasts admirably with the Hebrew march. Compare them and you will see that the music is astonishingly rich. Elcia confesses her love before the two Hebrew chiefs and sacrifices it in that admirable air of 'Porge la destra amata.' Ah! What grief! But look at the audience!"

The pit was shouting "Bravo" as Genovese left the stage. Freed from her deplorable lover, La Tinti sang "O desolata Elcia," that wonderful cavatina which gives voice to a love punished by Heaven.

"Rossini, where art thou?" cried Cataneo. "If he could but hear that magnificent rendering of his genius! Is not Clarina peerless?" he asked Capraja. "To vivify those notes by jets of fire, imbibing in the air some unknown winged matter which is attracted by our ears, and which carries us aloft in a rapture of love, she must be divine!"

"She is like the beautiful Indian plant which shoots upward from the earth, absorbing in the atmosphere invisible nourishment, and which sheds from its spiral blossoms such fragrant perfumes that they fill the brain with dreams," replied Capraja.

La Tinti reappeared alone. She was overwhelmed with acclamations; she received a thousand kisses blown from finger-tips; roses were flung at her, and a crown was made of flowers taken from the ladies' hats, almost all of which had been made in Paris. The cavatina was encored.

"How anxiously Capraja, lover of the cadenza, awaits that piece which derives its whole value from the way in which it is sung! The cadenza and the soul of the singer are everything. With a mediocre voice or execution it would be nothing. The throat originates all its brilliancy. The singer must express the greatest possible grief, that of a woman who sees her lover dying at her feet. La Tinti makes the theatre resound with the most thrilling tones. Rossini, for the purpose of leaving every artistic license to the voice, has written simple and clean-cut phrases. As a last effort he has composed those harrowing musical exclamations: *Tormenti! Affanni! Smanie!* What cries, what anguish in that cadenza! La Tinti, you see, has carried her audience away by her sublime efforts."

The Frenchman, astounded by that furious admiration of the whole audience for the source of its enjoyment, had obtained a glimpse of the real Italy; but neither the Duchess, Vendramin nor Emilio paid the slightest attention to La Tinti's ovation. The Duchess feared that she was seeing Emilio for the last time. As to the Prince, in the presence of the Duchess, that imposing divinity who lifted him heavenward, he forgot where he was. He did not hear the voluptuous voice of her who had initiated him into the passion of the world, for a horrible melancholy prevented him from hearing anything but a chorus of plaintive voices, accompanied by a noise resembling the fall of heavy rain. Vendramin, clothed in the garments of a Doge, was witnessing the ceremony of "Bucentaur." The Frenchman, who had divined some strange and sad mystery between the Prince and the Duchess, was evolving the most ingenious hypotheses to explain them.

The scene had changed. In the middle of a fine picture representing the Desert and the Red Sea, the movements of the Egyptians and the Hebrews went on without disturbing the serenity of the four occupants of the box. But, when the first chords of the harps announced the prayer of the delivered Hebrews, the Prince and Vendramin rose and leaned against the sides of the box; the Duchess rested herself upon her elbow and held her head in her hand.

The Frenchman, warned by these movements of the importance attached by every one to that so justly celebrated prayer, listened to it attentively. The entire theatre demanded a repetition of the prayer amid great applause.

"I seem to be witnessing the liberation of Italy," thought a Milanese.

"That music lifts up the bowed head and gives new hope to the weary heart!" cried another.

"Here," said the Duchess to the Frenchman, whose emotion was visible, "science has disappeared; inspiration alone originated that masterpiece. It has come from the soul like a cry of love! As to the accompaniment, it consists of harp arpeggios, and the orchestra does not come in until the celestial theme is repeated for the last time. Never will Rossini rise higher than in that prayer; he may do as well, but never better. The sublime is always the same; but that prayer is one of the things which belong to him alone. A similar conception can only be found in the sublime psalms of Marcello, a noble Venetian, who was to music what Giotto was to painting. The majesty of the phrase, the form of which gradually unfolds, giving us immortal melodies, is equal to anything ever composed. How simply it is done! Moses begins the theme in G minor and finishes in a cadenza in B flat; the chorus repeats it pianissimo at first, in B flat, and then in G minor. That exquisite movement in which the voices repeat the phrase three times is terminated by a stretto in G major which grips the soul. It seems as though that hymn, as it mounts toward Heaven, were met by strains from the celestial spheres. The rounded periods of those motives, the grace of the slow gradations which prepare for the climax of the hymn and its return upon itself, develop celestial images in the soul.

"Can you not see the heavens opened, the angels with their golden sistrums, the kneeling seraphims waving their censers of perfume, and the archangels, returned from some holy war, resting on their flaming swords? The secret of that harmony which refreshes the soul is, I believe, that it throws us for an instant into the Infinite. That boundless melody must be like the hymns sung round the Throne of God. The genius of Rossini carries us to a tremendous height, whence we can see the Promised Land, and our eyes, caressed by Divine radiance, look out into space unbounded by any horizon. Elcia's last cry brings a strain of earthly love into that hymn of thankfulness. It is a stroke of genius.

"Sing!" cried the Duchess, as the last bar was being played, "sing! you are free!"

The last word was uttered with an accent which made the physician start. To distract her from unpleasant thoughts, he tried to open an argument with her.

"Madame," he said, "as you explained to me this masterpiece, to which, thanks to you, I shall return to-morrow and enjoy intelligently, you frequently mentioned the color of music and certain ideas which it painted. Now, as an analyst and materialist, I confess to you that I am always displeased by the assertions made by certain musical enthusiasts who would have us believe that music paints with sound. Is it not as if the admirers of Rafael claimed that he sang with colors?"

"In the language of music," replied the Duchess, "to paint is to awaken by sounds certain memories in the heart, or certain pictures in the mind, and these memories and pictures have their own particular color; they are sad or gay. You are juggling with words, that is all.

According to Capraja, each instrument has its own mission and appeals to certain ideas, just as each color awakens in us certain sentiments. Have you, when looking at golden arabesques on a blue background, the same thoughts as you have when contemplating red arabesques on a background of black or green? In the one as in the other painting there are no figures, no sentiments expressed; it is pure art, and yet no one will remain absolutely emotionless while looking at them. Do not the brass instruments suggest something warlike; do they not arouse in us enthusiastic and sometimes furious feelings? Do not the strings, whose substance is taken from organic nature, affect the most delicate fibres of our body? Do they not stir one to the heart? When I spoke to you of sombre colors, of the icy notes used in the introduction to 'Moses,' was I not just as exact as your critics who speak of the color of such and such a writer's style? Do you not recognize the nervous style, the insipid style, the colored style? Art paints with words, with sounds, with colors, with lines and with forms; if the methods are various, the effects are the same. An Italian architect will give you similar emotions to those awakened in you by the introduction to Moses by taking you through gloomy and obscure avenues, suddenly bringing you out upon a smiling valley, beautifully watered, with flowers and dwellings bathed in sunlight. At their best the arts are only the expression of the great spectacles of nature.

"I am not learned enough to go deeply into the philosopy of music; but go and question Capraja; you will be surprised by what he will tell you. According to him, any musical instrument is superior as a language to color which is fixed and to speech which is limited. The language of music is infinite; it includes everything. It is able to express everything. Now do you know in what consists the superiority of the work you have just heard? I can explain it to you in a word. There are two musics: one petty, insignificant, always alike, which rests on a score or two of phrases which every composer appropriates and of which a more or less agreeable noise is made, which is the means of subsistence of most composers. You listen to their songs and their pretended melodies with some pleasure perhaps, but absolutely nothing remains in your memory: a hundred years pass and they are forgotten. All nations, from antiquity to our own day, have kept as precious heirlooms certain hymns which furnish a clew to their manners and customs—I might also say their history. Listen to one of those national anthems (the Gregorian Chant is perhaps the earliest) and you will fall into deep reveries; strange emotions will pass through your soul, in spite of the simplicity of the musical ruin. Well, every century there arise one or two men of genius—not more—the Homers of music, who compose those melodies, big with mighty deeds and great poems. The music of this oratorio contains a world of great and secret things. A work which begins with that introduction and ends with that prayer is immortal—as immortal as the 'O filii et filiæ' of Lent; as the 'Dies Iræ' of Death; as all the songs which in every land survive the splendors that are gone."

The tears which the Duchess brushed away as she left the box signified that she had been thinking of the Venice which was no more. Vendramin kissed her hand.

The performance closed with prolonged hisses and whistles for Genovese's benefit and an outburst of applause for La Tinti. It was some time since the Venetians had seen the theatre so animated. At last their city was favored with that party-spirit which is so universal in Italy, where the smallest town has always been divided by opposing factions: The Ghibellines and the Guelphs everywhere; the Capulets and the Montagues at Verona, the Geremei and the Lomelli at Bologna, the Fieschi and the Doria at Genoa, the Pazzi and the Medici at Florence, the Sforza and the Visconti at Milan, the Orsini and the Colonna at Rome, the nobles and the people, the Senate and the Tribunes of the Roman Republic. In short, everywhere there was the same tendency. In the streets there were already Genovesians and Tintists.

The Prince escorted the Duchess, whom Osiride's love had saddened still more; she had a foreboding of some similar catastrophe to herself.

"Remember your promise," said Vendramin to the Prince; "I shall wait for you on St. Mark's Place."

Vendramin took the Frenchman's arm and proposed that they stroll up and down the Place of St. Mark while waiting for Emilio.

"I shall be glad if he does not return at all," said he.

This began a conversation between the Frenchman and Vendramin, who saw an opportunity to consult the physician, and told him of Emilio's singular state. The Frenchman did what every Frenchman does under all circumstances; he began to laugh. Vendramin, who considered the matter in a very serious light, became angry; but he calmed down when the pupil of Magendie, Cuvier, Dupuytren and Broussais said that he thought that he could cure the Prince of his excessive happiness and dissipate the halo of celestial poetry with which he had surrounded the Duchess.

"Happy misfortune!" said he. "The ancients, who were not as simple as their crystal heaven and their ideas of physics would lead one to believe, described in their fable of Ixion that power which destroys the body, making the spirit ruler of all things."

Vendramin and the physician observed Genovese coming toward them, accompanied by the fantastic Capraja. The music lover was exceedingly curious to know the real cause of the fiasco. The tenor, on being questioned, began to babble as men do who are intoxicated by the strength of their passion.

"Yes, Signori, I love her; I adore her with a passion of which I did not believe myself capable. Clara believes that I am jealous of her success and that I tried to prevent her triumph at the Fenice; but I applauded in the wings, and I cried 'Diva' louder than any one else."

"But," said Cataneo, appearing on the scene, "that does not explain how, from being a divine singer, you should have sunk to the very worst."

"I," cried Genovese—"I a bad singer; I, who rival the greatest masters?"

The French physician, Vendramin, Capraja, Cataneo and Genovese had reached the Piazzetta. It was midnight. The brilliant bay which mirrored the churches of St. George and St. Paul at the end of the Giudecca, and the Grand Canal, so gloriously opened by the Dogana and the church dedicated to Santa Maria della Salute, was quite still. The moon lighted up the vessels along the Schiavoni. The water about Venice, which is not affected by the tide, seemed alive with millions of sparkling diamonds. Never had singer a more magnificent theatre. Genovese called the sky and sea to witness with a dramatic gesture;

then, without any other accompaniment than the murmur of the sea, he sang the air of "Ombra adorata," Crescentini's masterpiece. This song, which rose between the famous statues of St. Theodore and St. George, on the bosom of silent Venice, in the soft light of the moon, the words so much in harmony with the scene, and Genovese's melancholy expression—all overwhelmed the Italians and the Frenchman. At the first note Vendramin's face was covered with great tears. Capraja was as motionless as one of the statues before the Ducal Palace. Cataneo seemed to be struggling with some emotion. The Frenchman, surprised, reflected like some student who discovers a phenomenon which nullifies one of his fundamental axioms. Those four men, so different, whose hopes were so empty, who believed in nothing before or after them, who regarded themselves as nothing more than fleeting and accidental products of nature—suddenly looked into the Infinite. The soothing melody which poured from that throat gently caressed their souls. The faintly visible clouds, like blocks of white marble silvered by the moon, seemed to be populated with worshipping angels. The simple and artless melody, as it penetrated their hearts, brought them Light. How holy was that passion!

But the tenor's vanity gave them a frightful awakening.

"Now, do you think I sing badly?" said Genovese when he had finished the air.

Every one regretted that the instrument had not been worthy of its melody. So that divine music was inspired by wounded self-love! The singer had felt nothing; he had no idea of the holy feelings and the divine images he had raised in the hearts of his listeners. They had dreamed of Venice lifting her winding-sheet and singing, and they awoke to find a tenor's vanity.

"Do you understand the meaning of that phenomenon?" the physician asked Capraja, hoping to learn something from the man whom the Duchess had mentioned as such a profound thinker.

"What do you mean?" asked Capraja.

"Genovese, who is excellent when La Tinti is not with him, and who brays like an ass when he is on the stage with her," said the Frenchman.

"He obeys some secret law, the demonstration of which will be probably given by one of your scientists, and which the next century will find in a formula full of *x*, *a* and *b*, interspersed with strange algebraical characters, lines and dashes that make me ill; for the finest mathematical discoveries have added but little to our pleasures. When an artist is unfortunate enough to be full of the passion which he wishes to reproduce, he cannot depict it, because he is the thing itself instead of being its image. Art emanates from the mind and not from the heart. When your subject dominates you, you are its slave and not its master. You are like a king besieged by his people. Too keen a feeling at such a moment is the insurrection of the sense against the mind."

"Should we not make sure of that by another trial?" asked the physician.

"Cataneo, you may bring your tenor and your prima donna together again," said Capraja to his old friend.

"Gentlemen," said the Duke, "come and sup with me. We must reconcile the tenor and Clarina, or the season will be spoiled for Venice."

The invitation was accepted.

"Gondoliers!" cried Cataneo.

"Wait a moment," said Vendramin to the Duke; "Memmi awaits me at the Florian; he must not be left alone. We must make him drunk to-night or he will kill himself to-morrow . . ."

"Corpo Santo!" cried the Duke, "that fine youth must be preserved for the happiness and future of my family; I shall invite him."

They all returned to the Café Florian, which was thronged with excited people. In a corner, near one of the windows opening on the gallery, sat Emilio, the picture of misery.

"That fool," said the physician to Vendramin in French, "does not know what he wants! There is a man who has the power to separate Massimilla Doni from all that is earthly, possessing her in the skies in the midst of an ideal pomp which is impossible to realize here. He can see his mistress continually sublime and pure, he can always hear within himself that music which we just listened to down by the water; he can live forever in the fire of those eyes which give the air about him that warm and golden tint with which Titian has surrounded his Virgin in the 'Assumption,' and which Rafael invented, in a moment of inspiration, for his 'Christ Transfigured'—and that man would destroy that poetry! By my advice he will unite sensual and spiritual love in that woman! He possesses a divinity, and the misguided man would change her into a female! I tell you, sir, he has abdicated Heaven, and I would not be surprised if later on he dies of despair. Oh, lovely virgin faces, exquisitely fashioned in a pure and ardent oval, the finest example of art victorious over nature! Divine feet that cannot walk; slender forms that a breath of wind would destroy; beings admired in secret, hopelessly worshipped, bathed in the light of some tireless desire! You who are seen so dimly, but whose smile lights up our existence, what glutton of an Epicurus would bring you to earth? The sun shines on the globe and warms it only because it is thirty-three million leagues away; go near it, and science will tell you that it is neither warm nor luminous—and science is worth something," he added, looking at Capraja.

"Not bad for a French doctor!" said Capraja, tapping the foreigner on the shoulder. "You have just explained that which Europe least understands about Dante—his Beatrice! Yes, Beatrice, that ideal figure, the queen of poets' fancies, the purest of them all, consecrated by tears, deified by memory and kept ever young by the power of Desire!"

"Prince," said the Duke in Emilio's ear, "come and sup with me. Surely you cannot refuse a poor Neapolitan after robbing him of both his wife and mistress."

This Neapolitan jest, spoken with polite good-humor, wrung a smile from Emilio, who allowed himself to be led away. The Duke had already despatched one of the café waiters to the palace. As the Memmi palace was on the same side of the Grand Canal as the Santa Maria della Salute, it was necessary to walk round by the Rialto Bridge or go by gondola. But the guests did not care to separate and elected to walk across Venice. The Duke, on account of his infirmity, was forced to go by gondola.

At about two o'clock in the morning any one passing the Memmi Palace would have seen every window brilliantly illuminated and would have heard the exquisite overture to Semiramide played by the Fenice orchestra, which was giving a serenade to La Tinti. The guests were seated at a table in the gallery on the second floor. From the balcony above La Tinti, in recognition, sang Almaviva's "Buona sera," while the Duke's steward was distributing money to the poor artists and inviting them to a dinner to be given next day. These little courtesies were forced upon noblemen who happened to be interested in any particular singer. In such cases it was necessary to entertain the entire company. Cataneo was generous; he was the manager's paymaster. This season alone had cost him two thousand crowns. He had furnished the palace completely, engaged a French cook and filled the cellars with the finest wines. So you may judge of the excellence of the supper.

Placed next La Tinti, the Prince was suffering from that complaint which the poets of every country associate with an arrow and a heart. The image of the divine Massimilla was rather obscured. La Tinti, feeling herself loved by Emilio, was the happiest woman in the world. She was animated by a joy which shone in her face; her beauty was so resplendent that all the guests, as they emptied their glasses, bowed to her in admiration.

"The Duchess is not equal to La Tinti," said the physician, forgetting his theory in the fire of the Sicilian's eyes.

The tenor ate and drank sparingly; he seemed wrapped up in the prima donna and had lost that careless gayety which is a peculiarity of Italian singers.

"Come, Signorina," said the Duke, looking appealingly at La Tinti, "and you, caro primo nomo," addressing Genovese, "mingle your voices in a perfect unison. Repeat the C in 'Qual portento,' to convince my friend Capraja of the superiority of unison over the cadenza."

"I must take her away from the Prince whom she loves!" said Genovese to himself.

What was the surprise of those who had heard Genovese on the bank of the lagoon when they heard him bray, shriek, snort, howl, gurgle, bark, cry and even produce a sound which could only be described as a rattle of the throat. While he was performing so ridiculously he presented to the astonished gaze of the guests a sublime and exalted expression like that of the martyrs painted by Murillo, Titian and Rafael. The laugh which rose to everybody's lips changed to a serious and almost tragic expression when they saw that Genovese was acting in good faith. La Tinti seemed to understand that her companion loved her and had told the truth on the stage, that land of falsehoods.

"Poverino!" she murmured, caressing the Prince's hand under the table.

"Per Dio Santo!" cried Capraja, "will you explain to me what score you are reading from, assassin of Rossini? For God's sake, tell us what ails you? What demon struggles in your throat?"

"Demon?" replied Genovese, "say rather the god of music! My eyes, like those of Saint Cecilia, are gazing upon angels who are pointing me out, one by one, the notes of a score written in characters of fire, and I am trying to follow them. Per Dio! Do you not understand me? The feeling which animates me pervades my whole being; my soul and throat are one. Have you never in a dream heard sublime music composed by unknown musicians who work upon that pure sound which nature has placed in every object and which is but faintly expressed by us, but which, in those marvellous strains, is produced without the imperfections of man, who cannot be all feeling, all soul? . . Well, I reproduce those wonders for your benefit and you curse me! You are as mad as the pit of the Fenice which hissed me. I scorned that vulgar mob which could not mount with me to the heights where art is born; and yet you are not ordinary men; that Frenchman. . . . What, has he gone?"

"Half an hour ago," said Vendramin.

"What a pity! he might have understood me, since you Italians do not . . ."

"Off you go, then," said Capraja, playfully tapping him on the forehead; "chase your brilliant chimera as much as you like!"

The guests, convinced that Genovese was drunk, went on talking without paying any attention to him. Capraja alone had understood the Frenchman's question.

While the wine of Cyprus was loosening every tongue, and every one was riding his favorite hobby, the physician was waiting outside the Duchess's palace with a gondola. He had sent up a note written by Vendramin. Massimilla was so alarmed by the Prince's farewell and so startled by the hopes given her in the letter that she came down in her night dress.

"Madame," said the physician to the Duchess after he had seated her and given the order of departure to the gondoliers, "Emilio Memmi is in danger and you alone have the power to save him."

"What must I do?" she asked.

"Ah! madame, you, with the noblest face in Italy, must consent to play an infamous part. Can you, fair angel of pure and spotless beauty, resign yourself to descend from the blue skies in which you dwell? Can you lower yourself to the love of a Tinti? Can you dissemble that love so well that Emilio will be deceived?"

"Is that all?" said she, smiling and exhibiting to the astonished Frenchman a new phase in the character of an Italian woman in love. "I will surpass La Tinti if it be necessary to save Emilio's life."

"And you will merge into one being his spiritual and sensual love, divided by a mountain of poetry, which will melt away like snow under the rays of the sun."

"I shall be eternally indebted to you," said the Duchess gravely.

When the Frenchman returned to the banquet, which had assumed the appearance of a Venetian orgy, he had a cheerful look which Emilio, absorbed by La Tinti's charms, did not notice.

The physician whispered something in Vendramin's ear, and La Tinti became uneasy.

"What are you plotting?' she asked.

"Will you be a good girl?" said the physician with the abruptness of a surgeon.

The words pierced the poor girl's heart like a dagger.

"Come!" said the physician to La Tinti.

The poor singer rose and went to the other end of the room with the physician and Vendramin, looking like a criminal between the confessor and the executioner. She struggled for some time, but at last yielded for love of Emilio. The physician's last words were: "And you will cure Genovese!"

La Tinti whispered a word in the tenor's ear as she passed him. She returned to the Prince, put her arms round his neck and kissed his hair with an expression of despair that struck Vendramin and the Frenchman, the only men at the table who had kept their senses. Then she ran to her room.

Emilio, seeing Genovese leave the table and Cataneo deep in a long musical discussion with Capraja, rose and walked over to the door of La Tinti's room, raised the curtain and entered.

"Well, Cataneo," said Capraja, "you have satiated yourself with physical enjoyment, and there you are, hanging to life by a thread like a cardboard clown, covered with scars and never moving unless the string of perfect unison is pulled."

"But you, Capraja, who have used up every idea, are you not in the same state? Do you not live on the cadenza?"

"I? I possess the whole world!" said Capraja, with a royal gesture.

"And I have swallowed it!" replied the Duke.

They noticed that the physician and Vendramin had gone, and that they were alone.

The next morning the Prince's slumbers were disturbed by a dream. He felt on his breast pearls dropped by an angel. He awoke and found himself bathed in the tears of Massimilla Doni, who was looking at him as he lay there.

That evening, at the Fenice, Genovese, although he had remained with La Tinti until late in the afternoon, sang his part in "Semiramide" divinely; he was encored with La Tinti. Flowers were thrown at them; the pit was mad with joy. The tenor no longer tried to bewitch the prima donna by the charms of a celestial singing method.

Vendramin was the only one whom the physician could not cure. The love of a country which no longer exists is a malady which has no remedy. The young Venetian succumbed under the repeated shocks of his return from his thirteenth century republic to reality. He was mourned by his friends.

But how can the end of this story be told? It is so vulgarly commonplace! A word will suffice for the worshippers of the Ideal.

The Duchess gave birth to a son.

The Peris, the Naiads, the Fairies, the Sylphs of ancient times, the Muses of Greece, the Marble Virgins of the Certosa at Pavia, the Day and Night of Michelangelo, the Little Angels which Bellini put at the foot of his church pictures, and which Rafael painted so divinely in his Virgin and in his Madonna (now freezing at Dresden), the beautiful Maidens of Orcagna in the Church of San Michel at Florence, the Celestial Choir at the Tomb of St. Sebaldus at Nuremburg, the Virgins of the Duomo at Milan, the angelic population of a hundred Gothic Cathedrals—all gathered round Massimilla's couch and wept!

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